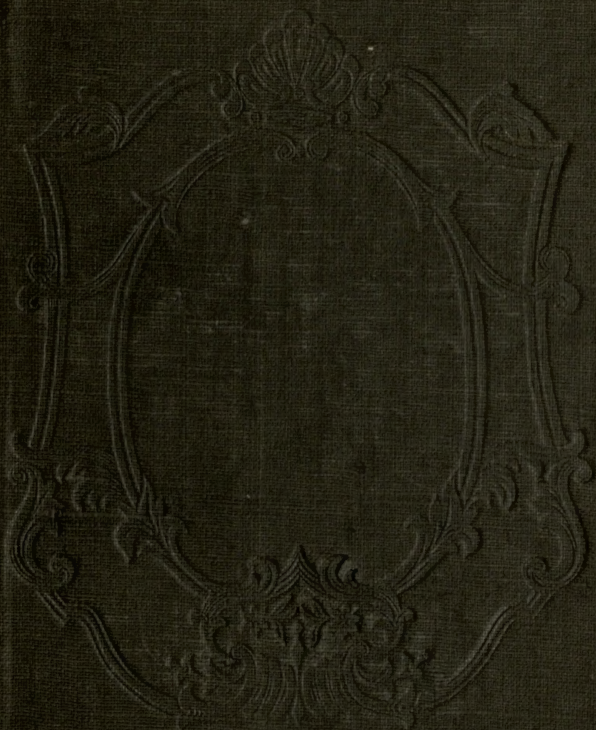


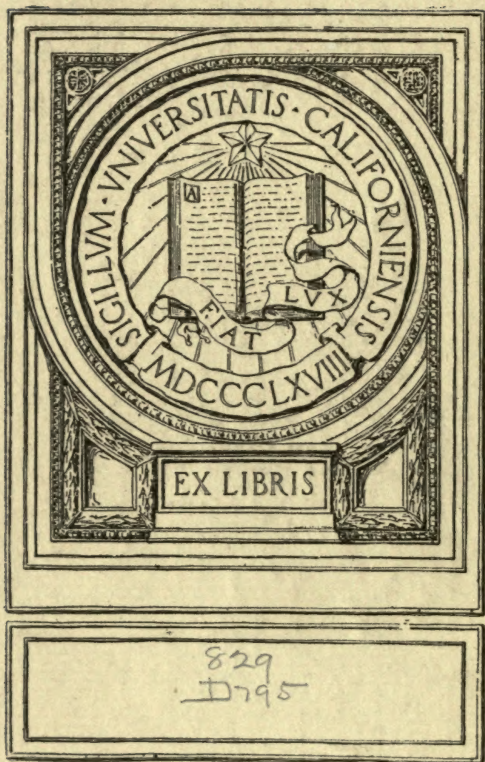
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ANCIENT IRISH MINSTRELSY.



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ANCIENT  
IRISH MINSTRELSY.

BY

WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND, D.D., M.R.I.A.

" Sweet Ossian ! who with thee can vie,  
In all the arts of minstrelsy ?  
What hand like thine such music bring,  
To charm the ear, from sounding string ?  
Or with such magic power control  
Each thought and movement of the soul ? "

page 190.

DUBLIN:  
HODGES AND SMITH, GRAFTON-STREET,  
BOOKSELLERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

MDCCLII.

A large, faint, stylized illustration of a landscape or architectural scene, possibly a temple or palace complex, rendered in a traditional East Asian style. The drawing is composed of numerous small, repeating motifs, possibly representing a map or a detailed architectural plan.

ANGLICAN

IRISH MINISTERS.

WILLIAM HAMILTON

HODGES AND SMITH, GEORGETOWN

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



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TO

THE REV. RICHARD MACDONNELL, D.D.,

PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, AND M.R.I.A.

REV. SIR,

To you this small volume is inscribed by the Author, to testify the high estimation in which he holds your character, not merely as occupying the highly honourable and well-merited station of Provost of the University of Dublin, of which it can be no flattery to say that you are its *decus et tutamen*, but as a friend and encourager of the general literature of your country. When you sat in the Council of the Royal Irish Academy as one of their officers, you evinced a genuine patriotic desire to promote the cultivation of letters in Ireland, not only by the general interest you took in the literary, as well as in the scientific and antiquarian researches of that learned society, but by proposing as the subject of prize essays—

829  
D795

*“To investigate the authenticity of the Poems of OSSIAN, both as given in Macpherson’s Translation, and as published in Gaelic (London, 1807) under the sanction of the Highland Society.”* That proposal, being adopted and acted on by the Academy, was assuredly the means of stimulating inquiry, and of rescuing certain valuable ancient manuscripts from oblivion or extinction, to say nothing of many of the Lays in this collection, which, for the first time, are now presented to the reader in an English dress. Since then, much has been done to bring to light some of the oldest records of the country that are yet extant; and the friends of Irish literature may indulge the hope that, under your auspices, their favourite investigations may be pursued with increasing ardour and success. That you may live long in health and happiness to promote them, in conjunction with the still nobler objects of your rank and position in society, is the sincere wish of

Your obedient Servant,

THE AUTHOR.



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## P R E F A C E.

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OF the Irish poems usually known by the name of Ossianic or Fenian, there are still extant many of great poetical beauty and interest, amply deserving of being introduced, in an English dress, to the general reader.

In Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland," Eudoxus inquires whether the Irish bards "have any art in the composition of their songs, or bee they any thing wittie or well savoured as poemes should be?" Irenæus replies, "Yea truely, I have caused divers of them to be translated unto me, that I might understand them, and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention, but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of poetry; yet were they sprinkled with some pretty flowres of their naturall device, which gave good grace and comelinesse unto them, which it is great pittie to see abused, to the gracing of wickedness and vice, which with good usage would serve to adorne and beautifie vertue."\*

It is pretty evident that Spenser is here speaking

\* In this description there seems to be some inconsistency. If the poems savoured of "sweet wit and good invention," and were sprinkled with some pretty flowres "which gave good grace and comeliness unto them," what were the "goodly ornaments of poetry," in which they betrayed a lack of skill? Warton, in his "Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser," remarks, that this illustrious poet's residence in Ireland furnished him with the name *Una*, or *Óonah*, the lady that accompanied the Red-crosse Knight. It might be worthy of inquiry, whether Spenser has wreathed any of the "pretty flowres," of which he speaks, into his own poetic garland.

of Bards who were his contemporaries, and who “abused their gift and art of song to the gracing of wickedness and vice;” and not to the ancient bards, or to those compositions which celebrated the heroic achievements of Finn and his warriors, and which were generally ascribed to Ossian. Had he caused some of these to be translated to him, he would probably have found in them some “goodly ornaments of poetry,” not surpassed in beauty and grandeur by those of the classic pages of Greece and Rome, though, as a whole, challenging no comparison with the great works of the classic Muse. Many of them belong rather to that species of minor epic, the ballad poetry of England, which records such facts as Chevy Chase and the Battle of Otterburn, and containing passages which must have moved the heart and sounded in the ears of their auditors as “The Old Song of Piercie and Douglas moved the heart and sounded like a trumpet” in the ears of Sir Philip Sidney.

Notwithstanding the “savour of sweet wit and good invention, and the sprinkling of pretty flowres,” which so admirable a judge as Spenser attributed to the songs of the Irish bards, they lay long neglected, and to English readers not known even to exist. After the lapse of ages the fame of Macpherson’s Ossian excited the wonder of our Irish bards and senachies. They heard with astonishment indescribable, that their own long well-known countryman, Fin Mac Cumhal, who held his chief place of residence at Almhuin—the Hill of Allen in Leinster—the general of the Fenians—renowned for his martial achievements—the glory of their green isle—was no longer their’s, but discovered by the new revelations of a wonder-working magician, to be no son of Erin, but a



Caledonian king named Fingal—the king of woody Morven—a kingdom of which they had never before heard even the name. Strong feelings of indignation succeeded the first emotions of surprise. They claimed Finn and his son Ossian as their own, and in no measured terms expressed their resentment at the piratical attempt to rob them of their martial and minstrel fame. Those who were acquainted with Irish history, though but partially, soon saw through the imposture. Various writers exposed it; and had the Royal Irish Academy, or our Gaelic and Archæological Societies then been in existence, they would at once have extinguished the pretensions of Macpherson, and demonstrated the fallacy of Blair's criticisms, and the nothingness of the most ingenious arguments that could be advanced to raise and support an edifice which had no solid foundation.

The confident style in which Macpherson expressed himself on every subject connected with his Ossian had the effect of mystifying and deceiving the public. It would naturally be concluded that one who had brought to light such literary treasures, must have had a thorough knowledge of their true history—that he must have known, at least, the Gaelic language in the various stages of its purity and corruption—that he was familiar with its manuscript characters and abbreviations. Notwithstanding we have the authority of a distinguished librarian of the Bodleian library, as testified by Dr. Charles O'Connor, for affirming, that when certain ancient Irish manuscript verses were placed in Macpherson's hand, with a request to read and interpret them, he confessed that he could do neither.\*

\* "Extat idem Carmen in alio Codice Bodleiano Rawl. 487, fol., &c., cujus se nec verbum quidem intellexisse imo nec legere

Now it was surely incumbent on an author who was obliged to make this confession, to speak with modesty of himself and with caution of others. But to enhance the value of his own fictions, he deemed it necessary to depreciate the compositions of Irish bards and historians. Ireland was to be destroyed that his new creation of Morven might continue in existence. In a note to "Temora," he says, "The Irish compositions concerning Fingal invariably speak of him as a giant," (vol. II. p. 126). "Of these Hibernian poems," he adds, "there are now many in my hands," and after giving "one instance of the extravagant fictions of the Irish bards," he continues thus:—"puerile and even despicable as these fictions are, yet Keating and O'Flaherty have no better authority than the poems which contain them, for all that they write concerning Fian-Mac-Comnal and the pretended militia of Ireland." Notwithstanding these strong assertions, he says, "Fingal is celebrated by the Irish historians for his wisdom in making laws, his poetical genius, and his foreknowledge of events. O'Flaherty goes so far as to say that Fingal's laws were extant in his own time." (Note to Carthon, p. 64.)

If Macpherson had read Keating, whom he treats so unjustly, he would have found him positively contradicting Hector Boetius for asserting in his

*potuisse propter abbreviationes.*"—"Macphersonus, percontante clarissimo Bibliothecario, confessus est,—se nec verbum quidem Carminum istorum intellexisse."—DR. O'CONNOR'S *RER. HIB. SCRIPTORES*, vol. I., pp. cxxiii—ci.

Dr. Young says that Macpherson "once was of opinion that the beauty of Erse writing consisted in its 'not being bristled over with unnecessary quiescent consonants, like the Irish.' But the learned Colonel Vallancey, to whom the Celtic literature of this country owes so much, showed him how thoroughly he was mistaken in this matter."



History of Scotland, that Finn was of gigantic size, fifteen cubits high, and that by the ancient records of Ireland, whose authority he (Keating) says, he holds sacred, Finn did not exceed the common proportion of the men of his time, and there were many soldiers in the militia of Ireland that had a more robust constitution of body, and were of a more extraordinary stature. \* \*

His uncommon stature, therefore, and gigantic strength, are mere fictions designed to abuse the world, and to destroy the credit of those historians who treat upon the affairs of the old Irish government."\*—pp. 294, 295.

It is rather unjust to our Irish historians to charge them with the very abuse which they take so much pains to expose and condemn. As for the bards, they are treated with equal discourtesy. "I have rejected them all," says he, "in my compositions," and then he boasts that he has in his hands all that remain of the lays of the bards;" but that "unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period—they are *entirely* written in the romantic taste which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches, and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's inventions. The celebrated Fion could scarcely move from one hillock to another without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches on broomsticks were continually hovering round him, like crows; and he had freed enchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland." (p. 203.) He says that Finn in those poems is attacked by kings "as tall as the mainmast of a

\* See Note, pp. 81—83.

first-rate,"—that Finn is not inferior to them in height, and that his heroes had this and other extraordinary properties. "*In weight also the sons of strangers yielded to the celebrated Ton-iosal; and for hardness of skull, and perhaps thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood unrivalled and alone, and the brave Cuchullin was of so diminutive a size as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran.*"

That there are many extravagant and wildly romantic tales among, or connected more or less with, the early minstrel songs of Ireland, is not questioned; but an honest and candid writer, who had no selfish motive to bias his judgment, would have distinguished between the true and the false—the historical record and the fabulous invention.

Had Macpherson been just to his own fame, he would have told honestly where, and when, and how, he became possessed of the Gaelic compositions from which he constructed his system, and not rashly presumed on the ignorance of Irish writers, or their inability to detect and expose his impositions. But so little solicitous was he to avoid detection or inquiry, that he threw down the gauntlet of defiance and challenged hostility. His falsifications of Irish history, and his frequent vilification of the songs of Irish bards, as a foil to his Ossian, concocted as it was from the scattered remains, the *disjecta membra*, of the very bards he depreciated, were too much to be patiently endured, and accordingly he was assailed not only by Irish writers, jealous of the literary and poetic celebrity of their country, but by such Scottish and English historians and critics as Malcolm Laing, and Dr. Samuel Johnson, who saw through the imposition



at a glance, and refused to take assertion for proof, and fabulous invention for genuine history.

That Macpherson was a man of genius and taste is not doubted. He knew, and had a relish for, the beautiful and sublime. He had an ear for euphonious cadence, and could appreciate the beauty and power of the picturesque language of Erin, as the names of his heroes and heroines, and of the scenes of their adventures, amply demonstrate. To the felicitous use he made of these qualifications, may be justly attributed no small share of the popularity which his Ossian obtained on its first appearance. To him we are, in some measure, indebted for having, though undesignedly, drawn the attention of scholars to our long neglected manuscripts, concealed in the archives of private students, or collected, as they are, in such encyclopædical volumes as the books of Lecan and Ballymote, and the other various works of our annalists and historians. The *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, edited by Dr. Charles O'Connor, at the expense of the Duke of Buckingham—the magnificent volumes of the *Four Masters*, translated by Dr. John O'Donovan, and published with the original Irish—various learned and elaborate essays on Irish literature and antiquities in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy—the topographical, historical, and antiquarian investigations of the scientific men employed in the “Ordnance Survey” of Ireland—the establishment of professorships of Irish in the Queen's Colleges—the learned labours of the Gaelic and Archæological Societies, and the translation of the Brehon laws now in progress—all indicate that there has been, and is, a growing desire to rescue from oblivion the ancient literary remains and historical records of Ireland. Every genuine patriot

must rejoice to promote, in whatever way he can, the true glory and prosperity of his country—to see her literary and scientific, as well as her industrial resources, explored, and rendered ancillary not only to the present enjoyment, but the future fame of her poets, historians, legislators, and men of science.

The characters in these poems are generally marked with just discrimination, either by their mental or personal qualities. Finn is the *beau ideal* of an Irish hero and prince, unconquered in the field, magnanimous, courteous, hospitable, ever ready to espouse the cause of the weak, to avenge and redress the wrongs of the injured, to reward the songs of the bards. He is also gifted with a knowledge of futurity, and is skilled in oneiromancy, and in the virtues of medicine. He is gentle and forbearing—to females, tender and polite—to his relatives and friends, kind and affectionate.

Gaul, the son of Morni, is an intrepid and successful warrior. It has been remarked that he more resembles Ajax than any other of the Homeric heroes. When the Fenians have suffered defeat from the enemy, and are in danger of being totally overcome, Gaul generally appears in the critical emergency; and, by his superior might and valour, restores the battle and overcomes the foe. Of the other heroes, one is distinguished by his speed, as Caoilte;—one, as Fergus, by his eloquence and address;—another, as Dermuid, by his admiration of the fair, and who, like the Trojan Paris, carried away the wife of his general, and gave rise to many traditions, still extant, of his adventures when he absconded with his Helen.

There is one remarkable personage in these lays, who has not received the attention which he merits



This is Conan Maol, or Conan the bald, as generally translated. He has been compared to the Thersites of Homer, to whom, indeed, he bears some resemblance, but he is much more versatile and entertaining, being a strange compound of absurdity, cunning, buffoonery, cruelty, and cowardice, with the occasional semblance of valour, boastful as Falstaff, and sometimes, as he is described in Irish prose romances, as fond of a banquet as was that celebrated worthy of a cup of sack and sugar, and showing, by his actions and sayings, some affinity to the clown of pantomime, and of amphitheatrical equestrian entertainments. He might claim kindred with Sir Kay, “the most foul-mouthed of Arthur’s knights, whose tongue appears to have been somewhat readier than his sword.” Macpherson introduces him in the sixth book of his Fingal, demanding the arms of Cuchullin. He names him as one “of small renown ;” and subjoins in a note, “He is mentioned in several other poems, and always appears with the same character. The poet passes him over in silence till now, and his behaviour here deserves no better usage.” The ancient bards seem to have thought differently. Such a character was in high estimation among them, not as a hero, but, to them, as one of the *dramatis personæ* to the author of a farce or comedy. He afforded them an eligible opportunity of introducing some witty, farcical or satirical speeches and actions, to break the monotony of their songs and recitations, to relieve the attention, and give entertainment to their auditors. Their little interludes, of which Conan is the principal actor, with the succession of smiles to tears—of the pathetic and sublime to the risible and ludicrous, are essentially Irish. But Macpherson never ventures to smile. He never

lays aside the buskin for the sock—nor can he for a moment come down from his epic stilts.

Many of the Fenian poems commence with a dialogue between Ossian and St. Patrick, a name studiously suppressed by Macpherson, in which the old warrior-bard treats the psalm-singing saint not only with no courtesy, but with insolence and threats. He highly extols the Fenian heroes, and the poems which celebrate their praises, as infinitely preferable to the melancholy chants to which he is sometimes doomed to listen. The saint, as becomes him, responds with meekness, and compliments the bard by requesting him to repeat a tale of the times of old, with which request the bard readily complies.

These poems, like some of our ancient English ballads, often assume a dramatic character, without the formal announcement of the speaker's name. The transitions are abrupt, the descriptions brief and suggestive. Walker remarks that "it is probable they were recited at the convivial feasts of the chiefs, and in the public conventions, by several bards, each bard assuming and supporting a character in the piece." In the Report of the Highland Society, a letter from the Rev. Donald Macleod states that "the Highlanders, at their festivals, and other public meetings, *acted* the poems of Ossian. Rude and simple as their manner of acting was, yet any brave or generous action, any injury or distress, exhibited in the representation, had a surprising effect towards raising in them corresponding passions and sentiments."

In some parts of Ireland where Irish is still spoken, the custom of singing and reciting old lays is not yet altogether obsolete. A learned Irish scholar, who has often been present at convivial meetings, where music formed part of the enter-

tainment, has informed the author, that the effect produced by it on the auditors is beyond expression animated. Inspired by "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and by sounds as stirring as those of old Timotheus, whose

"breathing flute  
And sounding lyre,  
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire,"

their hearts beat in concord to the varying strain; they are melted to pity or fired to heroic ardour. They "applaud with a furious joy," and seem ready to take the field and "fight their battles o'er again."

The first collection of poems translated from the Irish, which has fallen under the author's observation, is that of Miss Brooke, entitled "Reliques of Irish Poetry," and published in 1788.\* Prior to this, indeed, in the summer of 1784, Dr. Young, fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, in an excursion to Scotland, took particular pains to discover what poems, supposed to be Ossian's, were to be found in the Highlands. Of these he made a small collection, and published them with a few explanatory notes, and a translation into English, in the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. He also obtained some fragments of poems, but in Erse so corrupted as almost to defy interpretation. In his paper on the subject he

\* "The earliest known translation of an Irish poem into English verse, is Michael Kearney's version of John O'Dugan's chronological poem on the kings of Eibhear, translated A.D. 1635, 'to preserve that antient Rhyme from the overwhelming floods of oblivion which already devoured most part of Nationall Memorayes.'"—8vo, J. O'Daly, Dublin, 1847.

"About the same period as Miss Brooke's, an unfortunate neglected genius named Wilson, edited a small 12mo volume of Ossianic poems, with a few songs in the Irish language, but in the Roman character, which is now very scarce."—Id.



informs us that Mr. Smith, who published a volume of poems attributed to Ossian and other Highland bards, confesses that Macpherson compiled his publication from those parts of Highland songs which he most approved, combining them into such forms as, according to his ideas, were most excellent, retaining the old names and leading events." To this let it be added, that he did not confine himself to the remains of the Celtic bards, but borrowed freely from the Hebrew Scriptures, and from Greek and Roman poets, whatever he deemed most suitable to his purpose. As for genuine Irish manuscripts, he probably obtained all that were then to be found.\*

In January, 1807, was held the first general meeting of the Gaelic Society of Dublin, having for its objects to "promote the study of Irish literature, and to publish every fragment existing in the Gaelic language," — a truly noble and patriotic design, which, "if pursued with spirit and perseverance, will redound much to the honour of Ireland." In furtherance of this design, the first volume of the Transactions of the Society appeared in 1808, containing "interesting observations on the Gaelic language, several tracts in Irish, accompanied with translations into Latin and English, and some considerations on the poems ascribed to Ossian."

\* Sir James Macdonald, of the Isle of Skye, in a letter to Dr. Blair, says, "These islands never were possessed of any curious manuscripts, as far as I can learn, except a few which Clanranald had, and which are all in Macpherson's possession. The few bards that are left among us, repeat only detached pieces of these poems."—*Appendix to the Report of the Highland Society*, p. 4.\*

\* Mr. Pope, minister of Rea, in Caithness, ascribes the loss of many of Ossian's poems "partly to our clergy, who were declared enemies to these poems; so that the rising generation scarcely knew any thing material of them." The same gentleman gives some curious instances of the great corruption which the original language has suffered in the Highlands.

Though the efforts of the Society were entitled to liberal support, the encouragement received was too languid to enable them to persevere, and it gradually declined till it ceased to exist. Happily, however, the Irish Archæological Society was founded in 1840, for “The Printing of the Genealogical, Ecclesiastical, Bardic, Topographical, and Historical Remains of Ireland.” The Society wisely availed themselves of the aid of the most competent Irish scholars which Ireland can boast, and nobly have they fulfilled the design of their institution by publishing, in Irish and English, many of the most ancient and interesting compositions extant, on the several topics mentioned, illustrated by numerous learned notes and comments.

Great is the honour due to the memory of the Duke of Buckingham, under whose patronage and at whose expense the four costly volumes of *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, edited by Dr. Charles O'Connor, were presented to the world in the years 1814—1826. Well might the spirited example of the Saxon noble have put to shame the coldness and apathy of our Celtic nobility, who could see the remains of the ancient histories and literature of their country sinking into oblivion, without stretching forth a hand or expressing a wish to rescue them from the gulf.

The example, however, was not without due effect—as has been strikingly testified by the publication of the “Annals of the Four Masters,” in five magnificent quartos, translated by Dr. John O'Donovan, and published by Hodges and Smith of Dublin in 1848—1851. The intrinsic excellence and costly style of this publication may be regarded as forming a new era in the history of Irish literature.

To this may be added O'Geraghty's edition of

the same work, from the year 1171, to its conclusion in 1616, translated by Owen Connellan, Esq., Professor of Irish in Queen's College, Cork; and published under the auspices of Sir William Betham—that eminent antiquary “to whom Irishmen are so much indebted for his liberal and enlightened encouragement and love of Irish literature.” To students of Irish history and antiquities this is indeed a most valuable work, for, independent of the Annals, the notes will be found to contain (as expressed in the preface), “a great mass of materials, and much interesting and important information, not hitherto published, together with collections from various sources, rare books and manuscripts; the whole forming a compendium of Irish history, from the earliest ages to the English Invasion, with continued illustrations to the end of the annals in the 17th century.”

Though Miss Brooke's volume of “Reliques” was well received by the public, no similar collection followed till 1831, when two handsome volumes were published by James Hardiman, Esq. M.R.I.A., entitled “Irish Minstrelsy, or Bardic Remains of Ireland, in the original Irish, with Poetical Translations.” Though it may be lamented that this work does not comprehend the Ossianic minstrelsy, it contains much that the friends of Irish literature deem highly valuable, enriched as it is with the poems of Carolan and “Jacobitic Relics,” numerous specimens of elegiac, bacchanalian, and amatory songs; and vindicating the exclusive right of Erin to certain favourite musical airs, which she claims as her own against all rival pretensions, though some such have been advanced.

“In 1843, Mr. John O'Daly, when living in Kilkenny, published a collection of Irish Jacobite



songs, which he got metrically translated by the late Edward Walsh, and which extended to 120 pages 8vo. On his removal to Dublin in 1845, he prepared a very useful little work entitled "Self-instruction in Irish, which he published in 1846, and of which a second edition appeared in 1848, and is now exhausted."

"In 1849, he edited a collection of Irish songs peculiar to Munster, which he got translated by the ill-fated genius Clarence Mangan, in which he gave the original airs. This edition sold off in the short space of twelve months. A second and enlarged edition appeared in 1850, which also is nearly exhausted." To this may be added, by the same spirited editor, "The Tribes of Ireland, a Satire, by Aengus O'Daly, versified from the Irish by James Clarence Mangan, and an Introduction to the History of Satire in Ireland, by John O'Donovan, LL.D. and M.R.I.A."

"Conor Mac Sweeny published several numbers of Irish songs without translations. Of these very few came before the public, as the editor destroyed the entire edition on account of a few errors which occurred in the press."

In 1845 was published the fifth edition of "The Ballad Poetry of Ireland," edited by Charles Gavan Duffy, consisting, as expressed in the preface to the volume, "neither of the old bardic songs of the country, nor of the street ballads common in the mouths of the people, but of another class chastened and elevated by modern art, but equally indigenous and equally marked with a distinct native character."

In 1846, Mr. Henry R. Montgomery, a native of Belfast, published a small volume of "Specimens of the Early Native Poetry of Ireland, in English Metrical Translations," by various translators, and

accompanied with Historical and Biographical notices.

Many pieces of ancient Irish minstrelsy have appeared from time to time, in magazines and various periodicals, in connection with romantic tales, historical and antiquarian records, and especially in the various volumes of the Celtic and Irish Archæological Societies.

For the translations here presented to the reader, the author bespeaks indulgence. Every written language has peculiarities and beauties of its own, which few or none to whom it is not vernacular, can duly understand or appreciate. Some idioms cannot, and others ought not to be, verbally translated. When the author commenced the task of versifying these lays, his intention was to be as literal as possible; but though fully sensible of the importance of fidelity to the sense of the original, and of guarding against the danger of diluting it by amplification, or rendering it dry by brevity, he soon found that by rigid adherence to the very letter of the original, the translation would seem bald and often obscure and feeble. He then supposed that some occasional indulgence might be granted to the translator of these Lays, to amplify a thought or description. If such indulgence be allowed to the translation of works whose authorship has never been questioned, it may well be extended to the translation of works whose authors' names are lost in the stream of time, and whose language has become so obsolete as to require the aid of glossaries to be understood.

As to the varied style of versification into which these lays are now translated, the author deems it more favourable to the spirit of the original, the chief requisite of translation, than that of a continuous sameness of stanza, like that adopted by

Miss Brooke, and in which much of our English ballad poetry is composed. Long poems in quatrains, consisting of alternate eight and six syllable lines, are soon felt to be exceedingly monotonous; and they scarcely allow that force and variety of expression which the varying topics of the subject require. He has, therefore, preferred a more varied style, and thrown most of the poems into sections or paragraphs of different lengths. It would have been an easy task to have clothed them in greater pomp of diction, and translated them into English heroics, rather than into lyric verse. But the reader will be pleased to remember, that the originals were composed to be sung to the music of the harp, the tones of which the skilful harper would vary according to the nature of the subject, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe."

When Sir Philip Sydney tells us how he was moved by the old song of Percy and Douglas, though "sung by some blind crowder—and apparelled in the dust and cobweb (*the old rude simple style*) of that uncivil age," he asks, "what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?" To which question, we may with some confidence reply, that in such trimming it would be caricatured, and might excite emotions more akin to the ludicrous than the sublime. The strong impassioned thoughts of the Irish bards and warriors, are best expressed in the simplest laconic style, and, like female beauty, are when "unadorned adorned the most."

Whether any of the Lays in the following collection, or in any other, are the genuine compositions of Ossian, who flourished in the third century, may well be doubted, but it is not unreasonable to conclude, from his universally acknowledged poetic



genius, that he composed many poems, which were long remembered, but which, in the lapse of years, were corrupted and mutilated, till only a few fragments were left. These seem to have become the common property of succeeding bards, each of whom, in his recitations, amplified, curtailed, or interpolated them as he thought proper. When in singing or reciting them, he felt a lapse of memory, he would supply the want, like an improvisatore, by some unpremeditated strains, or the introduction of favourite passages from other poems, and when, like Scott's "Last Minstrel,"

"In varying cadence soft or strong,  
He swept the sounding chords along,  
Each blank in faithless memory void,  
The poet's glowing thought supplied."

This is in perfect accordance with Macpherson's declaration that "the Highland senachies never missed to make their comments on, and additions to the works of Ossian;" and again, that "the bards who were always ready to supply what they thought deficient in the poems of Ossian, have inserted a great many incidents between the second and third Duan of Cathloda." No one ever indulged in such liberties more licentiously than Macpherson himself.

If, in a few instances, the author has given expression to a thought, or heightened a description by colourings of his own, he flatters himself that nothing of the kind has escaped him inconsistent, or out of keeping, with the sense and spirit of the ancient Irish.

Sir Walter Scott, speaking of imitations of the ancient ballad, and of that "learned and amiable prelate Dr. Percy," says that he was "remarkable for his power of restoring the ancient ballad, by

throwing in touches of poetry so adapted to its tone and tenor, as to assimilate with its original structure, and impress every one who considered the subject, as being coeval with the rest of the piece. It must be owned, that such freedoms, when assumed by a professed antiquary, addressing himself to antiquaries, and for the sake of illustrating literary antiquities, are subject to great and licentious abuse; and herein the severity of Ritson was to a certain extent justified. But when the license is avowed, and practised without the intention to deceive, it cannot be objected to but by scrupulous pedantry."

In conclusion, it may not be irrelevant to remind the reader that these Lays are not to be considered as idle inventions or sports of imagination, but as records of interesting matter in the history of Ireland; for instance, of the battle of Gavra, and the invasion of the Scandinavian king Magnus. Here the archæologist and historian may find something to gratify their taste, and guide to curious investigation. Instances are not wanting to show that a bardish song has sometimes led to a rare discovery, as to that of the pieces of gold found near Ballyshannon by the Bishop of Derry, whose curiosity was excited by the song of an Irish harper, in all probability by the following lines in the Lay of Moira Borb, which record the death of a princely warrior, and describe the locality where he was interred:—

In earth, beside the loud cascade,  
The son of Sora's king we laid;  
And on each finger placed a ring  
Of gold, by mandate of our king;  
Such honours to the brave we give,  
And bid their memory ever live.—p. 42.

—See the Note, pp. 277, 278.

These Lays bear internal evidence that they are not the growth of an ignorant and barbarous age. They show that the people of Ireland had made no inconsiderable progress in civilization and refinement, and in the useful and ornamental arts—as in vocal and instrumental music—in the fabrication of arms, in the chasing of gems, in works of gold and silver, and in blazonry. The beautiful brooches, rings, torques, golden crescents, and other precious ornaments, which, with various implements of bronze, still continue to be found in the earth, and many of which may be seen in the cabinets of the curious, are so exquisitely wrought and finished as to excite the emulation of modern artificers. The nobles and warriors were in manner courteous, frank, hospitable, “jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel.” Their bearing to persecuted damsels, with their promptitude and bravery in espousing the cause and avenging the wrongs of the weak and oppressed, was equalled only by that of the knights of romance. They expressed a generous praise of the valour of their enemies, and lamented their untimely fate when they fell in battle. Of female beauty they felt the indomitable power, and evinced an enthusiastic admiration.

As reliques of the minstrelsy which once flourished in Ireland, these Lays have a claim to as much attention as any other objects of antiquity—as much, at least, as is paid to broken columns, illegible inscriptions, and cenotaphs abroad—or dilapidated round-towers, fractured urns, trilithons, and ogham epitaphs at home.



## Laoidh Magnuif Moir

### THE LAY OF MAGNUS THE GREAT.

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**ARGUMENT.**—The Poem opens with an address of Ossian blaming Patrick's want of taste in not listening to his song. Patrick replies that he prefers his psalms to the tales of the Bard, and this provokes Ossian to a rude and angry comparison. Patrick mollifies him by a complimentary answer, and requests him to repeat one of his Fenian tales. Ossian then proceeds to state, that as the Fenians were pursuing the chase, they saw a fleet of many ships approaching the shore. Finn asks who of his warriors would go and inquire whence they came, and their object in coming to Erin. Bald Conan sarcastically replies, that Fergus, Finn's favourite son, should be despatched to make the inquiry. Fergus indignantly rebukes Conan for his folly—but cheerfully undertakes the task. In answer to his call whence the invaders came, he is told that they came from Lochlin, and that king Magnus is their chief. Fergus says, that if they come in friendship they will be kindly received. Magnus exclaims that they come to take from Finn his dog and his wife; and threatens to take them by force. Fergus hurls back a stern defiance, and, returning to Finn, repeats what had occurred. Finn declares that he will never comply with such insolent demands. Each and all of the chiefs express their promptitude to meet the king of Lochlin in single combat, but Finn claims that honour for himself. The armies prepare for battle. After a sanguinary conflict, Magnus is overcome by Finn, and bound with thongs. Conan desires to cut off his head—for which he is sternly reprimanded. Finn generously spares the king of Lochlin, and gives him permission either to return to his own country or to remain and live in honour with him and the Fenians. Magnus, affected by such generosity, vows never more to wage war with Erin, and laments that he ever left his native dominions to pursue an enterprise that has proved so disastrous. The Poem ends with some moral reflections of Ossian, who perseveres in asserting the preference of his war-songs to the melancholy chant of Patrick's psalms.

## I.

OSSIAN.—Psalm-singing Clerk! to taste and sense  
 But small, in sooth, is thy pretence,  
 So listless is thy soul to hear  
 My little tale of the Fenians dear,  
     Whose praise our Bards resound;  
 Ne'er seen by thee, but known to fame,  
 Of harp and song the glorious theme,  
     And o'er the world renowned.

PATRICK.—Good son of Finn let truth be told,  
 Though sweet thy tales of times of old,  
 More sweet is the chant of hymns to me  
 Than all thy tales and thy minstrelsy.

OSSIAN.—Thy drawling chant, priest, shouldst thou dare  
 With tale of Fenian chiefs compare—  
     Chiefs of Gadelian line—  
 My past endurance should I rue,  
 And grieve, that in my vengeance due,  
     I made that head no longer thine.

PATRICK.—O most renowned the bards among,  
 Thou sweetest of the sons of Song,  
 Hailed as the generous good and brave,  
 Thy kind forgiveness let me crave.  
 Sweet is thy voice, and sweet the tale  
 Of the gallant sons of Innisfail,  
     That fondly I would hear—  
 O wake thy minstrelsy sublime,  
 And, with the deeds of olden time,  
     Now charm th' enraptured ear.

## II.

OSSIAN.—Then list—As on one ruddy morn  
 We pastime took with hound and horn,  
 And as to rouse the game we hied,  
 Far o'er the foam-crest waves we spied

### MAGNUS THE GREAT.

A numerous fleet with snow-white sails,  
Full-bosomed by the Northern gales,  
As bounding o'er the deep they flew,  
And shoreward near and nearer drew.  
Swift at the signal trumpet's sound,  
The gallant Fenians gathering round,  
From hill and glen—from east and west,  
In seven battalions onward prest,  
With spear and dart prepared to meet  
(Should Morna's\* son command,)  
The warriors of th' advancing fleet,  
Upon the shelving strand.

### III.

“What chief,” said Finn, “for glorious meed  
Of praise, will to their landing speed,  
To ask the rovers whence they roam—  
Their purpose what—and where their home?”  
Then Morni's son, bald Conan, cries,  
Conan the froward and unwise,  
“Who but some potent lord or king,  
Would cross the billowy main,  
Or hither yon proud navy bring,  
If not o'er thee to reign?—  
But as thy herald fleet employ  
That glib-tongued youth—that pretty boy—  
Well skilled to wheedle, coax, decoy—  
Thy Fergus to such office bred—  
He surely by his wonted art,  
In peace may prompt them to depart.”

FERGUS.—“My malediction on thy head!  
Bald wretch, of spite and malice born!  
To mischief ever prone;

\* “Morna, or Muirn Munchaomh, mother of Finn, and daughter of Thady, the son of Nuagatt, an eminent Druid, retained in the family of Cathaoir More. Almhuin, in the province of Leinster, was the native country and inheritance of Thady, upon which account Finn obtained possession of Almhuin, in right of his mother.”—*Keating*, p. 294.



Thy envious jeers and jibes I scorn :  
 And now I proudly own  
 That here I stand prepared to go  
 And parley free with friend or foe."

## IV.

Then, clad in arms, he sought the bay  
 Where moored a thousand gallies lay,  
 And with a voice that through the crowd  
 Of hollow war-ships echoed loud,  
 He on them boldly cried,  
 To tell the country whence they came,  
 Their purpose what, their chief, their name ;—  
 And thus a voice replied :—  
 " Great Magnus is the chief we own,  
 The king who sits on Lochlin's throne,  
 Mac-Mehee of the crimson shields,  
 With vengeance in his path ;  
 Strong is the sceptre that he wields,  
 And terrible his wrath."

FERGUS.—Why hither comes your haughty host,  
 Led by the potent chief you boast,  
 King of your speckled fleet ?  
 If you have sought green Erin's shore,  
 As friends, our friendship to implore—  
 'Tis well—we proffer welcome meet  
 To Lochlin's king renowned.  
 " We come," cried Magnus, fierce for strife,  
 " To take from Finn his beauteous wife,  
 And Brann his matchless hound."\*

\* This demand of the Northern Invaders will remind the reader of the Persians' demand of earth and water from the Greeks as proofs of their submission, and an acknowledgment of the superiority of the Persian monarch.

In Macpherson's *Fingal* (Book II., p. 197, Dublin edition), Swaran, King of Lochlin, amplifies the reply thus—"Take Swaran's peace, the peace he gives to kings when nations bow to his sword. Leave Erin's streamy plains to us, and give thy spouse and dog. Thy spouse high-bosomed heaving fair! Thy dog that overtakes the wind! Give these to prove the weakness of thine arm; live then beneath our power."

FERGUS.—Ere Finn his matchless Brann will yield,  
 Your hosts must bite a bloody field;—  
 Ere from his arms his spouse be reft,  
 Shall few be of our thousands left:—  
 No! ne'er shall either hence depart,  
 While life-blood throbs in Fenian heart.

MAGNUS.—Then, generous Fergus, hear me swear,  
 Though haughty be thy word,  
 Brann from the Fenian ranks I'll tear,  
 Or thin them by the sword:  
 In spite of all your armed array,  
 My ship shall bear them hence away.

FERGUS.—Great though thou art, a warrior strong,  
 Tho' proud thy vaunts, thy hopes tho' high,  
 Tho' glittering legions round thee throng,  
 Thy threats we scorn—thy words defy.  
 Not thou, nor all thy steel-clad host  
 Shall bear fleet Brann from Erin's coast.\*

## V.

Back Fergus sped, my brother dear,  
 With sun-bright aspect beaming clear,  
 Ne'er darkened by a shade of fear;

\* The following passage is a literal translation from the original Irish by O'Reilly. See Trans. of the R. I. Academy, vol. xvi. p. 321.

"Why comes the haughty host  
 Under the king of Loughlann of speckled ships?  
 If to seek our friendship,  
 Right good is their coming across the sea."  
 Haughtily answered Manus,  
 The supreme king of Lochlann of speckled ships;  
 "I will take his spouse from Fionn,  
 Against his will across the waves, and also Bran."  
 "The Fiann will give severe battle  
 To thy host, before they give up Bran;  
 And Fionn will give battle in abundance,  
 Before he surrender his spouse."  
 "By thy hand, O generous Fergus,  
 Though great thy reliance on the Fiann,  
 I will bring with me Bran across the sea,  
 Or combat briskly on his account."  
 "From thy hand, though great thy hopes,  
 From thy host, though great thy estimation  
 Of the numbers that you brought across the sea,  
 Never shall you carry Bran beyond the waves."

And straight to Finn and the Fenian band  
 Declared th' invader's proud demands—  
 "But ne'er shall Lochlin's king return  
 From Erin's shore with wife or hound,  
 Till fierce the strife of battle burn,  
 And loud our clashing blades resound."  
 "No"—Finn, with kindling anger said,  
 "My noble spouse I'll ne'er resign;  
 Nor till my limbs in earth be laid,  
 E'er cease to call her mine.  
 Nor part I e'er with Brann, till death  
 Has closed the portals of my breath.  
 But, son of Morni, shame and wo  
 Be ours, if long we linger here,  
 Nor haste to meet th' insulting foe;  
 To stay his wild career,  
 And let the king of Lochlin feel  
 The edge and temper of our steel."

GAUL.—By this right hand, great Finn, I vow,  
 Though numerous ships he boasts,  
 Before me Lochlin's king shall bow,  
 With all his mighty hosts.  
 Opposed to him in single fight,  
 His head I'll from his shoulders smite.  
 Said Oscar next, with honest rage,  
 "Be mine to prostrate on the strand  
 This monarch of the eastern land; \*  
 To quell his council sage †  
 Of twelve great chiefs and all their clan,  
 Matched with my Fenians man to man.

\* *Rígh inise toir*—king of the eastern isle. Miss Brooke's copy reads *inise toir* isle of boars. In the Report of the Highland Society, p. 151, the former reading is preferred; and in the justice of this preference, the present translator concurs.

† The judicial court of Odin consisted of twelve assessors; and hence the establishment of supreme courts composed of twelve members, who decided on all important matters, in Denmark, Norway, and other northern states. Hence our trials by juries of twelve men.



## VI.

A chief in bloody conflict tried,  
 Macluay next impatient cried ;  
 " This hand proud Lochlin's king shall stay  
 With all his strong and dense array "—  
 " And I, " said faultless Dermot Dunn,  
 " Shall ne'er the van of glory shun ;—  
     Let me th' invader meet :  
 With him will I the battle try,  
 Till of us twain the one lie slain  
     Beneath the victor's feet."  
 Says Fillan next—" A vision true  
 My soul prophetic saw last night ;  
     The monarch of the warriors blue\*  
 Before me reeled in deadly fight,  
 And severed from the body rolled  
 His grisly head with its casque of gold."

\* Miss Brooke renders Fillan's speech thus—

" My vision now I call to mind,  
     The starting Fillan cried,  
 I dreamed that with the Moorish king†  
     Alone the fight I tried."

† The original is *Rìgh thire na bhfeair ngorm*. "The king of the country of the Moors," literally, of the *blue men*. "This," says Miss Brooke, "seems a strange passage, and I must confess myself unable to conjecture whence it could have taken rise, or what connection there could have been between the Irish and the Moors."

The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society states that, "From its being wanting in all the editions that have been received by the Committee, there is reason to regard it as an interpolation: and it is highly probable that it was made in the ninth century, when the Moorish Mussulmans of Africa, after expelling the Goths from the richest portion of Spain, and reducing the refugee king of Austria to the base condition of furnishing a yearly tribute of a hundred beautiful damsels, proceeded to invade and possess themselves of Sicily (A.D. 828); whence they sailed to the mouth of the Tiber, and appeared before the gates of Rome (846) where they struck dread and horror into the numerous pilgrims who resorted thither from all the Christian kingdoms of the west."

This is a far-fetched explanation—and the question still remains, how did the Moors happen to form a part of the Scandinavian armies of Magnus? Does *shear gorm* necessarily mean Moors? *Gorm* signifies *blue, azure, sky-coloured; green, verdant*, (Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary)—an epithet properly given to the steel-clad invaders. By "the monarch of the warriors blue," it seems quite evident that Fillan meant Magnus the leader of the host. *Gorm Mhac* signifies a brave servant, a sturdy domestic, (Armstrong)—and the epithet here is more expressive of their valour than of their personal appearance—unless we suppose that, like some of Carleton's heroes, they were "blue-moulded for want of a beating."

“Joy! triumph! glory! all be ours!”  
 Said Finn, with blushing ardour warm,  
 “Let Lochlin marshal all her powers,  
 We’ll meet them with puissant arm,  
 But Magnus for myself I claim  
 With him to play war’s deadly game.”\*

## VII.

Then grasped the Fenians spear and shield,  
 And girt them for the battle field.  
 Our dauntless chieftain towered before;—  
 A spear each at his shoulder bore,  
 And sped we with no tardy pace,  
 To meet th’ invaders face to face.

## VIII.

In arms we spent a sleepless night,  
 Not as we wont remote from fear,  
 With music sweet, and waxen light,  
 With saffron, wine, and jocund cheer;  
 Nor till the second morn arose,  
 Beheld we our embattled foes.

\* Thus Achilles claims for himself the glory of slaying Hector—

Τους αλλες εναριζ’ απο δ’Εκτορος ισχειο Χειρας

“Rage uncontrouled through all the hostile crew;  
 But touch not Hector, Hector is my due.  
 Tho’ Jove in thunder should command the war,  
 Be just, consult my glory, and forbear.”

*Il. xvi., 112-115.*

Macpherson has imitated but feebly the several speeches of the Fenian chiefs on this occasion.

“Mine,” said Gaul, “be the seven chiefs that came from Lano’s lake.”—  
 “Let Inistore’s dark king,” said Oscar, “come to the sword of Ossian’s son”  
 —“To mine the king of Iniscon,” said Connal, heart of steel. “Or Mudan’s  
 chief or I,” said brown-haired Dermid, “shall sleep on clay-cold earth.”  
 “My choice (*says Ossian*) though now so weak and dark, was Terman’s  
 battling king; I promised with my hand to win the hero’s dark-brown  
 shield.” “Blest and victorious be my chiefs,” said Fingal of the mildest  
 look. “Swaran, king of the roaring waves, thou art the choice of Fingal.”

## IX.

With rapturous joy our hearts were filled,  
 E'en like the minstrels' harps when thrilled  
   Thro' every warlike string,  
 When first, as on the winds it flew,  
 The royal standard rose to view  
   Of Lochlin's glorious king:\*

And as we saw her squadrons wheel  
 All shining bright in burnished steel,  
 Ne'er shone before on Erin's strand  
 A sight so beautifully grand.  
 Close-marshalled on the battle field  
   Was many a noble royal-born,  
 With many a chief and many a shield  
   Bright-glancing in the ruddy morn;  
 And many a coat of crimson gleam  
 Warm-glowing in the orient beam;  
 And many a glaive with hilt of gold;  
 And many a flag of satin fold,  
   Waved o'er the proud array;  
 And many a spear far-flashing glanced;  
 On many a helm the white plumes danced,  
   Like ocean's feathery spray.  
 And there were battle-axe and sling,  
 With many a lord and many a king.

## X.

Finn's sun-burst bannert<sup>†</sup> high was raised—  
 A sheet of light Gall-grena blazed,

\* The original is *Meirge righ Lochlann an aig*, i.e. according to Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary, "The standard of the king of Lochlin the glorious." Miss Brooke renders the passage thus:—

"Before us on the crowded shore  
 Their gloomy standard rose."

Probably supposing it to be the celebrated raven standard, to which, however, there is no allusion in the poem. The Norwegian standard was named *Landeyda*, i.e. the Waster of Lands.—*Creighton's and Wheaton's Scandinavia*, p. 231.

† Their standards must have added much to the "pomp, pride, and circumstance" of the embattled forces. Strange that these striking and necessary appendages of war seem to have been unknown to Homer; and



As from its jewelled staff unrolled,  
 Out flashed its sun of flaming gold  
     Midst stars of silvery sheen.  
 Next Fullaing Torraid o'er the crowd,  
 Spread as a crimson thunder-cloud  
     Shot thro' with bars of green,  
 The banner of great Morni's son  
 Renowned for many a battle won,  
 That ever, when the foe-men fled,  
 The hot pursuit sustaining led.

## XI.

Now face to face the hosts advance  
 With measured step and levelled lance.  
 Trembles the ground beneath their feet,  
     Loud sounds their armour-clang ;  
 And ere in battle shock they meet,  
     Their bow-strings shrilly twang.  
 As dense as bird-clouds that have fled  
     The wintry tempest, soaring high,  
 Then with ten thousand wings outspread  
     Come rushing down the sky,  
 So thick the feathered arrows flew,  
 And quenched their thirst in a bloody dew.  
 Loud as on ice-fields ring  
     Dark storms of thunder-hail,  
 So stone-balls from the sling,  
     Rung on the brazen mail.

though Virgil mentions the *signa* of the Romans, they supply him with no imagery or description like the "meteor flag of England." In the fragment of an Irish poem, entitled the "Sixteen Men," (lent to the author by James Hardiman, Esq., to whom Irish literature is under great obligations), various battalions are described as marshalled under their respective banners, on which are blazoned or embroidered the heraldic insignia of each with much beauty and variety.

The standards of the ancient Irish, like their swords, and the swords of the British and Scandinavian heroes, were designated by significant names. The standard of Finn was named *Gallgrena*, sun-burst—from the image of the sun with which it was adorned like that of the Persians—rendered by Macpherson "the sun-beam of battle." The standard of Goll Mac Morni was known by the name of *Fullaing torraid*—sustain the pursuit. Irish regiments in modern times, are occasionally distinguished by names expressive of their impetuous and indomitable valour—as the *Fag an beleach*—*Clear-the-way* regiment, well known for its exploits in the Peninsular war.

And strong as fall the woodmen's strokes  
Re-echoing thro' the dell,  
When down they hew the forest oaks,  
The battle-axes fell,  
Like flash on flash of blazing levin,  
Till helms were crushed and targets riven,  
And bursting thro' the dense array  
They onward hewed their crimson way.

## XII.

Full well that day on Lochlin's host  
The Fenian chiefs fulfilled their boast,  
Down-cleaving, in their dread career,  
The broken ranks in front and rear.  
Then war-famed deeds were done—  
But Lochlin's monarch rash  
Has met with Cumhal's son—  
Their meeting broad-swords clash,  
In fierce and bloody strife  
For victory and life.  
As round and round they wheel,  
In many a rapid gyre,  
Bright gleams the stricken steel,  
In sparkling streams of fire;  
Like sledge and hammer when they chime  
On thundering anvil keeping time,  
From iron's hot-red-hissing bar  
Shaping the enginery of war.  
With blows on blows their steel-coats rang,  
From wounds on wounds the life-blood sprang,  
Till stunned, by one resistless blow,  
Down sunk the king of Lochlin low,  
And Erin's victor round him cast  
The captive's thong and bound him fast.\*

\* Such was the usual practice of our Irish heroes when victors. Macpherson's *Fingal*, Book V., where our Magnus is metamorphosed into Swaran, the conflict of the two chiefs is thus described:—"When the heroes met in fight there was the clang of arms. There every blow like the hundred hammers of the furnace! Terrible is the battle of the kings dreadful the look of their eyes. Their dark-brown shields are cleft in

## XIII.

When senseless Conan spied  
 The king of Lochlin bound;  
 With ruthless voice he cried,  
 "Fast pin him to the ground,  
 Till, as he lies on his gory bed,  
 His length I shorten by the head."  
 "Bald senseless fool!" with anger warm,  
 Said Lochlin's king—"To me  
 More sweet to die by warrior's arm,  
 Than live by grace from thee.  
 Thy noble chief may save or kill,  
 And use his victory as he will."

FINN.—Heroic prince, 'twas ne'er my joy  
 The vanguarded foe-man to destroy.  
 Since chance of war has made thee mine,  
 The right of conquest I resign;  
 And from this instant free thou art—  
 Free here to dwell—or free to part.  
 Go, measure back the roaring main,  
 And hail thy native shores again—  
 But let all discord cease;  
 Or here abide with honour crowned,  
 Among our Fenian chiefs renowned,  
 In bonds of lasting peace.

MAGNUS.—While throbs the life blood in my breast  
 This generous deed shall be confest;  
 And from this fateful hour  
 I vow, while life informs my frame,  
 Ne'er more a hostile blow to aim  
 Against the Fenian power.  
 And much, illustrious chief, I rue  
 That e'er in glory's wild career,

twain, the steel flies broken from their helms. They fling their weapons down. Each rushes to his hero's grasp." After a vigorous struggle "the strength of Swaran fell, the king of groves is bound." The wrestling which terminates the conflict is taken from another poem, entitled *Bas Chairill*, the Death of Carril—in which, the wrestling precedes the more serious engagement with shield and sword.



I left my native mountains blue  
For Erin's shore to steer,  
And see, upon this bloody plain,  
Half of my numerous thousands slain.

## XIV.

OSSIAN.—Such is my tale, thou reverend sage,  
And sweeter to me far  
To hear the din of battle rage  
And tell of glorious war ;  
Of Lochlin's fleet and Lochlin's king,  
And of their gallant darings sing,  
Than listen to the drowsy strain  
Of all thy sad psalm-singing train.  
Oh ! wert thou by the Southern shore,  
Where Lory's beauteous streamlets pour,  
By thy right hand, O sage, I deem  
Not small would be thy just esteem  
For the noble Fenian race ;  
Though poor am I, and stricken old,  
No children mine, no wife to fold  
Within my fond embrace ;  
But dull and sad I linger here,  
Without a sword, a helm or spear,  
Still listening to th' eternal chime  
Of psalms that want both sense and rhyme.

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## DEPARTURE, RETURN,

AND

## FALL OF MAGNUS.



DIFFERENT historians give various colouring to the conduct and exploits of Magnus, but all agree in their account of the final catastrophe. Keating informs us, on the authority of *Hacluit's Chronicle*, that, "so impatient was this cruel Dane to put his designs into execution, he landed with his wife, a few of his nobility, and a small number of soldiers, before the body of his fleet approached the shore, and set the country about him on fire. But the rest of the Irish were prepared to receive him, for they had laid ambushes to cut him off before the rest of his forces arrived, and surprised him with such success, that Magnus and all his men were destroyed. When the rest of the fleet arrived, they were so astonished with the misfortune of their captain and companions, that they made all the sail they could homewards, and bade a final adieu to the island."

In the preceding poem Magnus is only vanquished and captured, but not slain. The Bard thought it would redound more to the honour of Finn to act the part of a generous conqueror, and restore his prisoner to liberty, with permission either to remain in Ireland or return to his native country. Magnus, full of gratitude for such generosity, vows that he would never again unsheath his sword against so

generous a victor, and laments that he had ever engaged in so disastrous an expedition. Here we might suppose that the adventures of Magnus in Ireland terminated. But we learn from other sources, that he broke his vow, and though he embarked with his surviving troops, to return to Lochlin, he was compelled by their importunity to change his intention, and try, by a new attempt, to recover his lost glory. Of the poem which records this attempt, which in the issue was fatal to Magnus and his followers, Miss Brooke does not appear to have had any knowledge. We are indebted to the researches of the Highland Society of Scotland\* for the conclusion, which is printed at the end of the Report, in the original Gaelic, with a literal translation into English, from which the annexed metrical version is made.

If a genuine copy of this poem is extant in any Irish manuscript collections, Mr. Eugene Curry, to whom the students of Irish literature and antiquities are largely indebted, should he turn his attention to the subject, will discover it, and it is worthy of investigation, for in all the Fenian poems which have as yet become known to the curious inquirer, few surpass or equal this. The onslaught of the Fenians on the army of Lochlin is magnificently described, and with all the fire of Bardic inspiration—the comparison of their advance to that of a thunder-cloud fraught with the artillery of heaven—the overthrow of Lochlin's warriors to that of a withered forest on the mountain tops before the sweeping whirlwind—and the fall of Magnus in the whirl of spears to that of a fiery meteor into the roaring vortex of conflicting tides—may well be designated as matchless in sublimity.

\* Kennedy's Edition—Report pp. 330—332.



## I.

Now Magnus with his shattered host  
Was steering on from Erin's coast,  
Swift o'er the waves his gallies flew,  
And Erin lessened to their view.

## II.

His warriors, stung with shame and grief,  
Now eager pressed around their chief;  
And said they felt their bosoms burn  
Again to Erin to return.  
"For oh!" they cried, "'tis better far  
Again to try the chance of war,"  
Again in battle's fierce turmoil,  
To fight for victory and spoil;  
Yea better that our bones should lie  
And bleach beneath a wintry sky,  
Than thus to flee with blasted fame;—  
Oh grief! oh infamy! oh shame!"

## III.

Their burning words like shafts of fire  
Thro' Magnus shot, and roused his ire;  
And now he swore, from Fenian king  
That he, both spouse and dog would bring,  
Or in a glorious conflict fall—  
And thus they swore both one and all.

## IV.

Now changed their course, with sail and oar  
They sought the late forsaken shore,  
And soon upon the echoing strand  
We saw their glittering legions land.  
On like the roaring waves they passed  
When swept before the Northern blast;  
To the dark heath their march they took,  
With stern defiance in their look.

## V.

To know th' invaders' bold intent,  
Our chief his trusty herald sent.  
"Great Magnus and ye warriors bold,  
Where has your honour flown?  
Do ye your plighted faith uphold  
By the left hand alone?  
If here as foes ye come, declare  
Where are your vows, great Magnus, where?"

MAGNUS.—We left them yonder on the grass  
With dews o'er which the South-winds pass;  
And now upon this heath-clad plain  
We come lost glory to regain.

## VI.

Such furious onslaught then we made  
As ne'er before these eyes surveyed.  
With sword and lance we on them broke  
Impetuous as the thunder-stroke.  
As comes a cloud upon the gale  
Surcharged with lightning, storm, and hail,  
And smites the earth beneath;  
So dauntless on our foes we rushed,  
Their helmets, shields, and corslets crushed,  
And trampled on the heath.  
And fiercely as our anger burned,  
Ranks upon ranks we overturned,  
And like the whirlwind's rapid sweep  
Thro' withered trees that crown  
The headland rock or mountain steep;  
We struck the warriors down;  
And down their fallen ranks we trod  
Beneath our feet on the blood-drenched sod.

## VII.

In the vortex of the battle-field  
Where the bravest fought and the strongest reeled,

Where loudest din of battle rose,  
Where fiercest rung the storm of blows,  
Great Magnus fell—as forked levin,  
Or fiery meteor, falls from heaven.  
Where tide with tide in conflict meets  
And rolled by storms in wild recoil  
The eddying torrents chafe and boil,  
Engulfing mighty fleets.

## VIII.

Long, sad, and doleful was the strain  
Of Lochlin's sons for their hero slain;  
But none escaped th' unsparing sword,  
Unless our mercy he implored,  
Or skulking from the battle field,  
Protection found behind our shield.

## IX.

We too had bitter cause to mourn,  
When we saw our Fenians hacked and torn,  
I vow by Finn's most honoured name,  
To which ne'er clung reproach or shame,  
Of seven battalions strong and brave  
We left the third in a bloody grave.

NOTE.—In the notes to the *Chronicle of Mann* it is recorded that Magnus was killed August 24, 1103, in the memorable battle of Moichoba—a plain which Mr. John O'Donovan, our eminent Irish antiquary, determines to be “unquestionably the present Donaghmore (in Upper Iveagh), nearly midway between Newry and Loughbrickland.” See his translation of *Leabhar na g-Ceart*—Book of Rights, pp. 165, 166.



## LAY OF ARGEAN, SON OF ANGART OF THE SHIPS.

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ARGUMENT.—Ireland, as well as Greece, has had her Helen and her Paris, with ample cause to rue the fatal effects of female beauty; as may be exemplified by the tale of the fair Blanaid, in the romantic ages of Irish history, and that of Dervorghal, wife of O'Rourke, in its more authentic period. In the Fenian poems also it is recorded that the most fatal contest in which the Fenians were ever engaged was caused by the elopement of the king of Lochlin's wife with Ainlea, one of the Fenian heroes, who had been received as a guest and hospitably entertained at the court of Argean, her husband—a warrior of renown. The royal lady having conceived a passion for Ainlea fled with him to Ireland, and found an asylum among the Fenians. The king of Lochlin pursued with a powerful army, landed on the Irish shores, and immediately marched to Almhuin, the residence of the Fenian chief, determined to wreak his vengeance on the whole of the Fenian race. Ainlea met him in single combat, and was slain—but Argean himself, after performing many feats of valour, fell beneath the sword of Gaul, the son of Morni. The invading forces, determined to share the fate of their leader, fought till not a survivor was left. The victory of the Fenians, like that of Pyrrhus over the Romans, was so dearly bought that another such would "have utterly undone them." It was one of those victories

"For which the conquerors mourned so many fell."

The Fenians never recovered their loss in this disastrous battle.

Such is the subject of the following poem. It opens with a brief introduction informing us how St. Patrick, after the performance of his religious duties, was accustomed to seek recreation in the society of Ossian, to enjoy his conversation, and hear the sweet sounds of his harp. On one of these occasions, in compliance with the saint's request to hear the most desperate battle in which the Fenians had ever been engaged, Ossian recites the poem of Argean More.

Allusion is made to the subject of this tale in the poem of "The Chase:"—

" O'er the tide  
Two heroes hither bore,  
Of Lochlin, king of ships, the bride,  
And carnage heaped the shore."

A copy of this poem, "transcribed letter for letter from the copies now current in the Highlands, so far as they have been corrected by the editor, published at Perth in 1786," is among those published with a prose translation in the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. This copy differs in some important respects from a copy in the library of Dublin University, with which it was compared by Dr. Young—the object of the Perth edition being, apparently, to change the true scene of the poem from *Almhuin* in Leinster to *Albin* or Scotland, in violation of truth and consistency, to favour the notorious imposture of Macpherson.

In addition to the copy in the Transactions of the Academy the present writer has had the use of two different verbal translations—the one kindly lent him by Mr. Hardiman, the other by Mr. Eugene Curry. Each of these copies wants the embassy of the king's daughter to the chief of the invading enemy, which is found in the copy edited by Dr. Young—from which circumstance it may probably be regarded as an interpolation of more modern date than the rest of the poem.

A considerable part of this poem is borrowed by Macpherson in his "Battle of Lora"—a cento, like the rest of his collection, composed of fragments from different sources, thickly interspersed with mists, clouds, meteors, and moonshine, with whistling winds, half-formed sighs, and thin shrieking ghosts—a class of personages of which there are no records in the genuine Irish Minstrelsy. He also shows his tasteful ingenuity in changing the Irish names into others of more euphonious cadence. Thus Argean, king of Lochlin, becomes Erragon, chief of distant Lora—Caoilte MacRonain, as the Mac might sound badly, becomes Maronnan, and Ainlea assumes the name of Aldo. He also favours us with the name of Erragon's spouse, whom he calls Lorma—and of the king's daughter "Bosmhina—maid of the streamy Morven."

Macpherson's *Erragon* is a word of his own coinage, which he derives from *Ferg-thonn*, the rage of the waves—"probably," says he, "a poetical name given him by Ossian himself; for he goes by the name of Annier in tradition." Argean, the genuine Ossianic name, comes from *ar*, destruction or slaughter, and signifies one who slaughters. Macpherson's familiarity with the language of Scripture is frequently apparent. Near the beginning of his "Battle of Lora," he transfers part of the lamentation on Saul to Ossian's on Erragon—"Chief of distant Lora; How hast thou fallen on our mountains? How is the mighty low!"

## I.

FREED for a time, from studious care,  
From chant of psalms and drowsy prayer,  
Rejoiced the sons of Song to meet  
In hall or bower for converse sweet,  
And charm away the thoughts that stole  
In heavy languor o'er his soul,  
Oft would the son of Calfruin hie  
To hear sweet Ossian's minstrelsy,  
And list to tale of Fenians bold,  
Or legend of the days of old.

## II.

PATRICK.—All hail thou honored man of age,  
E'en, as in years, in wisdom sage,  
In frame and spirit strong;  
The hues of youth, both fresh and sleek,  
Still linger on thy ruddy cheek,  
Sweet sapient son of Song.  
Of gallant Fenian chiefs to sing,  
And laud them on the sounding string,  
Thine are the power and will;  
Now sing of Finn thy sire renowned,  
Thou who art ever courteous found,  
Sweet Bard of matchless skill;  
And name the conflict most severe  
In which he ever lifted spear,  
Since fate has spared thee yet to tell:—  
Though many and brave thy warriors fell.

OSSIAN.—O sage whose joy is psaltery sweet,  
To thee shall I the tale repeat,  
And how the strife began;  
The direst strife e'er the Fenians knew,  
Since first for Finn a sword they drew,  
Or formed their martial clan.



## III.

In Almhuin's rich and sumptuous hall  
 Adorned with gilt and jewelled spears,  
 Had Finn proclaimed high festival  
 For his men and noble peers:  
 But, by a luckless chance, were found  
 Two warriors of Drumderga's mound,  
 Unasked of all the crowd.\*—  
 Against our chief their anger rose:  
 For a ring of the sun† to be his foes,  
 In grief of heart they vowed.  
 Young Caoilte, Croncor's witty son,  
 The soul of revelry and fun;  
 And Ainle rich in manly grace,  
 The hope of Crimthan's noble race,  
 Ne'er slow his trenchant steel to bare,  
 And in the strife of heroes share.

## IV.

Within their galley's sable side,  
 Their trusty swords and shields they hide:  
 And now, swift-bounding o'er the wave,  
 Away have sped these warriors brave,  
 To Lochlin of the polished reins;  
 And to the king of her watery plains,  
 Great Argean bold and strong,  
 The son of Angart skilled to guide  
 His ships in triumph o'er the tide,  
 They tell their heartfelt wrong;

\* Such slights, like insults, are often more keenly resented than serious injuries. The goddess of Discord not being invited with the other Deities to the marriage of Peleus with Thetis, threw amongst the guests the fatal golden apple, with the inscription *detur pulchriori*, let it be given to the fairest. Thence arose the contention of the rival goddesses—the promise of beauty to Paris—the abduction of Helen—the ten years' war of Troy—and the ten thousand calamities of the Greeks. "Such great effects from trivial causes spring."

† *Bael Ainn*, Baal's ring—i. e. a year. See the title page of O'Connor's *Chronicles of Eri*.

And by their plighted hand agree,  
Each, for a year, his liege to be,  
Stout Croncor's son, of the sharp steel-blade,  
And Ainle ne'er in fight dismay'd.

## V.

In Lochlin's house of royal cheer,  
Soon rolled away a day and a year;  
Nor lacked they aught to glad the soul,  
Nor music sweet, nor sparkling bowl;  
Gay revellers at the festive board—  
For glory first to grasp the sword,

Till love their bane became.

The beauteous spouse of Lochlin's king  
Felt in her breast for Ainle spring

A fierce unholy flame.

With the long-haired youth of the trenchant brand,  
She fled, in speed, to Erin's land,  
And found at Almuin's royal seat,  
With the Fenian chiefs, a safe retreat.  
Such the dire cause from which arose  
To Erin's sons ten thousand woes.

## VI.

Soon Lochlin's king, of the bossy shields,

Is seen on Erin's shore;

And soon, wide o'er her fertile fields,

His glittering thousands pour;

With many a banner flaunting gay;

And, flashing in the sunny ray,

Shone many a helm, and many a spear,

As on they marched in high career,

By thrice six valiant princes led,

All men of might to battle bred,

Sworn, till the Fenians they had slain,

Ne'er to recross the briny main.

But every sword can feats perform,

Till tested by the battle storm.

## VII.

By rushy Almhuin's broad-spread height  
That swells o'er Leinster's waste,  
Where Finn's armed fortress met the sight,  
They pitched their camp in haste;  
And thence despatched a herald bold  
To Cumhall's son of the cups of gold,  
Demanding if in Almhuin's dome  
The faithless spouse had found a home.

## VIII.

Then Finn—of just and generous breast—  
Said Lochlin's wrongs should be redressed,  
And promised all th' invading host,  
In peace should they steer from Erin's coast,  
Gifts precious to be told;  
To Lochlin's king of the conquering sword,  
His lovely spouse should be restored  
With her weight of shining gold.  
But Lochlin's sons of their valour vain,  
This haughty answer give,  
No gold should tempt them o'er the main  
Till the Fenians ceased to live,  
And dared them, would they shun disgrace,  
To arm—and meet them face to face.

## IX.

To parley with the foe—to bend  
His haughty soul and sooth his care,  
With precious gifts a maid we send,  
A maid of beauty rare,  
The daughter of the king—  
Of pearly teeth and dark blue eye,  
Her soft persuasive voice to try,  
And back good tidings bring.  
With her we sent a hundred steeds,  
The strongest and best that Erin breeds,



No fleeter ever owned a rein,  
 Or scoured impetuous o'er the plain,  
 Rode by a hundred horsemen bold,  
 All clothed in robes of satin and gold  
     That like the bright sun shone.  
 As to the camp she hasted fleet,  
 She left her train and went to greet  
     Th' invading host alone.  
 Her hand two golden apples\* bore;  
 Bright gems she on her shoulders wore,  
 And on her robe, a spreading tree  
 Was wrought in rich embroidery.

## X.

ARGEAN.—O maiden of the tresses fair  
 From Finn what tidings mayst thou bear?

MAIDEN.—If thy false spouse thy shame has wrought,  
 And on thy name dishonour brought,  
 To thee his friendship Finn extends—  
 And me the pledge of his faith he sends;  
     A hostage to remain.  
 If to his proffers you agree,  
 Receive his choicest gifts by me;  
 A hundred sleek and well trained steeds,  
 The strongest and best that Erin breeds,  
     Obedient to the rein;  
 Rode by a hundred horsemen bold,  
 All clothed in robes of satin and gold  
     That like the bright sun shine.  
 These shalt thou have—and these beside  
 A hundred girdles long and wide  
     Inwrought with skill divine,

\* "M'Pherson transmutes 'The two golden apples' into an arrow of gold; and then adds, in conformity to his system, without any authority from the original, that these were the signs of Morven's peace."—Young.

"She came to the host of Erragon, like a beam of light to a cloud. In her right hand was seen a sparkling shell—in her left an arrow of gold. The first the joyful mark of peace—the latter the sign of war."—Macpherson.

Strength on the wearer to bestow,  
 In conflict with a stronger foe;  
 To guard from peril and alarm—  
 Sickness and pain away to charm—  
 To save from travail's pangs severe—  
 To pregnant dames a present dear.\*  
 These shalt thou have—and eke five score  
     Of salvers shining bright,  
 Once laid the kings of the world before  
     On joyous festive night.  
 Who from them feasts, shall thence, in sooth,  
 Enjoy a sweet perpetual youth.  
 These shalt thou have—and join to these  
 A hundred ships that cleave the seas,  
     Impelled by oar and sail;  
 Each manned with a brave and hardy crew  
 That ne'er from battle's front withdrew,  
     But still in arms prevail.

\* The great Scandinavian God, Thor, had a girdle of this description. It "had virtue to renew his strength as often as was needful."—*Mallet's N. Antiq.*, p. 94.

"Such girdles as those mentioned by the maiden were in early use in Ireland."—See *Vind. of the Ancient History of Ireland*, pp. 207-459, and *Whittaker's Manchester*, p. 369. Macpherson tells us "that sanctified girdles, till very lately, were kept in many families in the North of Scotland, which were bound about women in labour, and were supposed to alleviate their pains, and to accelerate the birth. They were impressed with several mystical figures, and the ceremony of binding them about the woman's waist was accompanied with words and gestures which showed the custom to have come originally from the Druids."

Sir Jno. Harrington, in a note appended to the 12th Book of his translation of *Orlando Furioso*, has the following passage:—

"Some say it is a great practise in Ireland to charme girdles, and the like, perswading men, that while they weare them they cannot be hurt with any weapon: and who can tell whether the diuel may not sometime protect some of his servants? But one notable example I have heard tending much to this effect. RORIE OGE (a notable rebell of Ireland) having taken in a vile and treacherous Parlee, my valiant cosin Sir HENRIE HARRINGTON prisoner, had one night his caben, or little hovell where he lay, beset with one hundred souldiers of the said Sir HENRIE his band, meaning to rescue their captaine by force, sith the rebels' demaunds for his delivery were such as Sir HENRIE himselfe (being his prisoner) would not condescend unto, but would rather hazard his life as he knew he should; I say these hundred men, well appointed, beset the house strongly, being made of nothing but hardles and durt, yet the villain, ere they could get in, gat up in his shirt, and gave the knight xliiii wounds, very deadly, and after gat thorow them all without hurt, where a mouse almost could not have got betweene: and I have heard it affirmed in Ireland that it was meere witchcraft."—*Orlando Furioso*, Lond. 1634, p. 94.

What was Homer's Cestus of Venus but an enchanted, or at least an enchanting, girdle?

These shalt thou have—and with them join  
 A hundred chiefs of royal line,  
 Who ever from their martial toil  
 Return enriched with glittering spoil.  
 These shalt thou have—and farther still,  
   A hundred hawks of fleetest wing  
 That, rushing from the cliff-girt hill,  
   Death to their quarry bring.  
 These shalt thou have—and, five times told,  
   Of breeding mares a score;  
 And of snow-white herds all the valley can hold—  
   These shalt thou have and more:  
 So take our gifts, thy spouse receive,  
   And our shores in peace, great warrior, leave.\*

## XI.

ARGEAN.—Illustrious maid, the gifts you bring  
 Are worthy of a noble king;  
 And brought by thee! unmatched in grace!  
 Of peerless beauty, form and face—  
   Oh! could I call thee mine!  
 But know the wrongs and wounds I feel,  
 By gold are healed not—but by steel.  
 Your gifts I must decline.

\* Here the classical reader cannot fail to remark the striking resemblance between this passage and that in Homer's description of the embassy to Achilles in the ninth book of the *Iliad*, in which numerous magnificent gifts are promised to the inexorable hero if he would relax his anger, and come to the assistance of the Greeks.—See *Iliad*, Book ix., lines 120-157, and 262-299. The latter passage is thus rendered by Pope:—

—Hear me, while I number o'er  
 The proffered presents, an exhaustless store :—  
 Ten weighty talents of the purest gold,  
 And twice ten vases of refulgent mould;  
 Seven sacred tripods whose unsully'd frame  
 Yet knows no office, nor has felt the flame:  
 Twelve steeds unmatch'd in fleetness and in force,  
 And still victorious in the dusty course:  
 (Rich were the man whose ample stores exceed  
 The prizes purchased by their winged speed);  
 Seven lovely captives of the Lesbian line,  
 Skilled in each art, unmatched in form divine,  
 The same he chose for more than vulgar charms  
 When Lesbos sunk beneath thy conquering arms.  
 All these, to buy thy friendship, shall be paid;  
 And joined with these the long contested maid,  
 With all her charms, Briseis he'll resign.—342-358.



By honor's binding laws I swear,  
Ne'er to forgive the guilty pair;  
Nor peace to Finn restore,  
Till he in thralldom own my sway,  
And all his herds, a glorious prey,  
Are driven to the shore.

MAID.—Ne'er, while his veins the life-blood warms,  
Shalt thou, though terrible in arms,  
See captive to thy conquering sword  
The Fenians, or their generous lord;  
Nor shalt thou e'er their herds command,  
Down-driven to the sea-beat strand—  
Oh! 'tis unwise our proffered peace  
And gifts of friendship thus to spurn——  
Here Argean, must our parley cease—  
No more I plead—but hence return.

ARGEAN—Sweet maid! all maids surpassing far,  
As yonder sun each little star  
That gems the brow of night.  
Thy tresses fair, like twisted gold,  
Are down thy ivory neck unrolled,  
In dazzling beauty bright.  
Thy voice of soft bewitching tone,  
Has half my stern resolves o'erthrown;  
Thy eyes such radiance glance  
As piercing to my inmost soul,  
Like magic all my thoughts control—  
They thrill me, and entrance.  
Oh! stay—all beauteous as thou art,  
Oh! stay—and from me ne'er depart,  
Stay and be ever mine.  
If thou consent with me to live,  
My sceptre and my crown I give,  
My power and fame are thine;  
And ever faithful by thy side,  
Will I thy fond adorer bide.

MAID.—Nay—leader of this numerous host  
In thousands marshalled round our coast,  
Since thus, unbending and unwise,  
You all our terms of peace despise—  
Since vain our counsels to assuage,  
And charm away your jealous rage  
And pardon for th' offenders gain;  
Farewell—your proffers I disdain,  
Insulting to my maiden fame;  
To thee a foul reproach and shame.

## XII.

Back to her princely sire's abode  
In royal state the maiden rode;  
And soon, in martial mood,  
With satin banners wide displayed,  
The Fenian warriors close arrayed  
Before th' invaders stood.

## XIII.

Then ere the conflict fierce began,  
Ere shields were struck, or man met man,  
In pride of strength, great Argean cried,  
That he our bravest chiefs defied  
To meet him hand to hand.  
Quick at the word, before the rest,  
To meet the foeman Ainlea prest;  
More bold than wise in deadly fight  
To grapple with superior might;  
Short was his gallant stand;  
For, by the second fateful blow,  
Down sunk the son of Crimthan low,  
Sheer cloven through the brain.  
And oh! it grieves my soul to tell  
How the gallant Fenians fought and fell,  
And drenched with blood the plain.  
Till at the solemn close of day  
In death thrice ten great chieftains lay.

## XIV.

Yet, O believe me, generous Sage,  
We quailed not at the conqueror's rage;  
Resolved, while e'er we owned a spear,  
    Ne'er to his proud demands to yield;  
But stay him in his proud career,  
    Or die upon the battle field.

## XV.

Then asked our Finn in rising grief,  
    " What noble youth of Innisfail  
Will dare to meet the slaughtering chief,  
    And o'er his might prevail;  
Before his sails for home be spread,  
Or more beneath his arm lie dead?"  
Cried Morni's son aloud,  
    Our fame's supporter bright,  
" Of Argean, fierce and proud,  
    Be mine to prove the might,  
Till well the conquering sword attest  
Who of us twain can wield it best."

FINN.—" Take with thee, of our bravest men,  
To share thy task, a score and ten,  
Brave chiefs, who in the van of fight  
Have stood, and ne'er knew fear or flight  
    From Cumhail's valiant crew;  
Macreit a chief our chiefs among,  
Ferdonan stout and Lugaidh strong,  
With princely Oscar, Dermod-dun,  
And Ossian too my gallant son,  
    A band of warriors true.  
And at each side of your sounding shield,  
Let a champion brave his claymore wield,  
To guard you from the dreadful swing  
Of the gory blade of Lochlin's king."



GAUL.—“ Not two, nor one, with me the fame  
Shall of this contest share ;  
Alone from Lochlin's king I claim  
Fair glory's meed to bear ;  
And soon, though proud he rears his head,  
This blade shall in his blood grow red.”

## XVI.

With stern defiance in his look  
Came Lochlin's hero on,  
His shining steel he threat'ning shook  
At Morni's noble son.  
Now foot to foot and hand to hand,  
Each warrior whirled his battle-brand,  
And loud and quick as the rattling hail,  
The weapons rung on their sounding mail.  
From the stricken steel a shower of fire  
Flew sparkling on the blast ;  
From gaping wounds, on the trampled mire,  
A shower of blood fell fast ;  
Till Lochlin's warrior king was laid  
Beneath Mac Morni's vengeful blade.

## XVII.

Eight days we battled with the foe,  
Till we smote their best and their bravest low ;  
While Gaul his triumph wide to spread,  
And strike their hearts with fear,  
Raised high the monarch's severed head  
All-ghastly on his spear ;  
And loud was raised a thrilling cry,  
For Morni's son and his victory.

## XVIII.

Back Lochlin's sons to their native home  
Ne'er spread returning sail,—  
Unless one dived beneath the foam,  
Or soared upon the gale,

The orient ray of morn bestrode,  
 Or in the sun's bright chariot rode—  
 To bear the tale from Erin's coast,  
 'Scaped not a man of Lochlin's host.\*

## XIX.

Then did I on the bloody field  
 No blunt or idle claymore wield—  
 But though that hard-fought field we won,  
 Our triumph had us near undone.  
 Then joy and glory crowned my brow,  
 Though poor I am and wretched now.

\* Macpherson gives a different termination to the exploits of Lochlin's sons. His Fingal commands to "stop the hand of death," and pronounces an eulogy on the fallen hero. "Mighty was he that is low. Much is he lamented in Sora! The stranger will come towards his hall, and wonder why it is so silent. The king is fallen, O stranger. The joy of his house is ceased. Listen to the sound of his woods. Perhaps his ghost is murmuring there! But he is far distant, on Morven, beneath the sword of a foreign foe." Such were the words of Fingal. "We stopped our uplifted swords—We laid Erragon in a tomb—His ghost appeared to some—an *half-formed* sigh is in his breast. Blest be thy soul, O king of Sora! thine arm was terrible in war!" The unfortunate lady who was the cause of all the mischief, laments the absence of her lover, and invokes him to come from his "sounding hills." "His thin ghost appeared on a rock, like a watery beam of feeble light. She knew that her hero fell. She sunk into the tomb. The daughters of Morven mourned her, for one day in the year, when the dark winds of autumn returned."

Thus "the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days in a year."

## THE LAY OF MOIRA BORB.

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**ARGUMENT.**—Ossian commences the Lay of Moira Borb without the usual introduction of a dialogue with St. Patrick—but with an expression of grief, excited by the recollection of what he is proceeding to record. While the Fenians were reclining with their chief on a cliff listening to the roar of a neighbouring water-fall, and enjoying the prospect of the sea, they beheld a corrac, or small boat, occupied by only one mariner, a female, approaching the land. Wondering at this novel appearance, they hastened down to the beach, to gratify their curiosity by a nearer view, when suddenly they saw a maiden of enchanting beauty and princely mien rise from the corrac and spring ashore. After a friendly greeting they conducted her to Finn, by whom she was most courteously received. On being requested to declare her rank and her object in coming to Erin, she replies that she is the daughter of a king whose dominion lies beneath the waves—that she is a refugee come to claim protection from the Fenians, against the prince of Sora, who would force her to be his bride. Finn, with his wonted generosity, promises that he will be her friend, and defend her against all aggression—and Oscar vows that she shall never be the spouse of her persecutor. Presently the prince of Sora is seen careering over the sea on a fiery steed, clothed in shining mail, and by his noble bearing and splendid attire, filling them with astonishment. As he dashes forward to seize the princess, Oscar and Gaul hasten to intercept him. Gaul rends his shield by the stroke of a dart, and Oscar flings from his left hand a javelin, the shaft of which had been hardened in the fire, and with such indomitable force, that it transpierced the magic steed, and struck him dead. Notwithstanding this disaster, the warrior prince, now on foot, defies fifty of the bravest Fenians, whom he overcomes, captures, and binds. As he easily vanquished all who approached him in close combat, they waged a distant fight—until Gaul, who is ready in all such emergencies, to turn the scale, comes forth to meet him, and, after a well sustained conflict, by a lucky thrust, lays his antagonist prostrate. The bard generously laments the fall of the heroic prince, and states that, by command of the king, he was interred with golden rings put on his fingers, as a tribute of respect to his valour. The heroine expressed her gratitude to Finn and the Fenians by remaining a year in the royal mansions of Almhuin. Gaul did not escape from the conflict without wounds which placed him for six months under his leeches's care.

The Bard, after lamenting the departure of his youth, the inefficacy of female charms to solace the cares of old age, and the failure of his mental faculties, concludes his "little tale."

The opening scene of this poem is by *Eas Ruadh* (Ashroe), "a very beautiful water-fall of the river Erne, at Ballyshannon, and the principal salmon leap in Ireland. The scenery is extremely picturesque; a bold coast of perpendicular rocks is covered to the very edge with the richest verdure, and projects in unequal promontories, as it opens to the sea."—*Miss Brooke*.

The word *Eas*, in the original, "signifies a water-fall, heap, or cataract, where the water is precipitated from an eminence, and of course makes a considerable noise; and on this idea '*Mac bobhair na mhoill*,' is translated by Miss Brooke '*deafening son of the heap*;' but we have the authority of an ancient Irish manuscript, that the *Eas* had its name from *Ruadh Mac Bobhair*, who was there accidentally killed by falling from the summit. The Scotch Ossian, however, makes his cataract *softly murmur*—'the fall of Roya that *softly murmurs*.' O'Reilly, p. 253. In a note to the *Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters*, Geraghty's Edition, p. 64, it is named "*Eas Aodha Ruaidh Mac Baduinn*. The cataract of Red Hugh, son of Badurn, where Red Hugh, monarch of Ireland, was drowned about five centuries before the Christian era."

In the Scotch copy, the pursuer of the lady is called "*Dyre borb*." In the Irish "*Moighre borb*." Macpherson differs from both, and calls him "*Borbar*." Neither the Scotch nor the Irish poem gives any other name for the lady but "*Neyn Re heir fa hne*," or "*Inghean Righ, thire fo thuinn*;" but Mr. Macpherson has supplied these defects, and christened the distressed damsel "*FAINASOLLIS*."—*O'Reilly's Essay*, p. 253.

The Report of the Highland Society remarks that "*Miss Brooke's Moira Borb* resembles, in many particulars, Macpherson's *Maid of Craca*"—and that in the report of the Rev. James M'Gregor will be found "a closer resemblance to Macpherson than is commonly the case; though in this, as in other instances, where such an opportunity of comparison occurs, the simplicity and distinctness of narrative in the original ancient poem will be easily contrasted with the general and more ornamented expression of Macpherson." "The catastrophe of the poem in Miss Brooke differs from that of the similar story in Macpherson, where the lady is killed by a shaft from the bow of her pursuer." This, however, was the fate of the heroine who was pursued by "*Illan*, son of the king of Spain," or "*Illan of Sora*"—a poem which has a striking resemblance to *Moira Borb*. Macpherson ingeniously dovetails into one story those facts and descriptions which properly belong only to another, and thus he makes up his centos from a variety of sources.



## I.

A little tale have I to tell  
 Of Cumhal's son, that matchless chief,  
 Which aye must be remembered well,  
 Although it wrings my heart with grief.

## II.

Where fierce Mac-Bovar's cataracts pour  
 Down the dark cliff, with deafening roar,  
 We lay, in number few;  
 When o'er the deep afar we spy  
 A corrac small advancing nigh;\*  
 One female all her crew.  
 Round princely Finn were gallant men,  
 Reclined at ease, two score and ten;  
 Such, lived they now, as might extend  
 Their rule to earth's remotest end;  
 Alas! alas! in death they sleep,  
 And I alone survive to weep.

## III.

All, sudden to their feet upsprung,  
 Save Cumhal's son and Gaul the brave,  
 To see the corrac as she flung  
 The spray aside, and cleft the wave;  
 Till in the little sandy bay,  
 Beside the cataract fall she lay.  
 Yet ere she touched the yellow sand,  
 Our swifter feet had reached the strand.  
 When up arose the maiden bright  
 And sprang ashore with speed of light.

\* The corrac was enchanted, as was the bark of Tasso's Rinaldo—

Una barca mirabile incantata  
 Ch'ella chiamo la barca avventurosa.

Enchanted barks, since the launching of the Argo, have been of great use in the machinery of the poetry of romance. In the Third Book of Macpherson's Fingal, instead of a corrac, "a white sailed boat appeared far off; we saw it like a mist that rode on ocean's wind."

Of purple was her flowing vest,  
 A jewel glittered on her breast;  
 Her face shone radiant as the sun,  
 Too dazzling\* to be gazed upon;  
 And such her dignity and grace  
 As spoke a maid of princely race.

## IV.

When to the tent of Finn she came,  
 Conducted by our band,  
 She hailed our chief of far-spread fame  
 With greeting sweet and bland,  
 As bland was he in word and look,  
 While by the hand the maid he took;  
 And with a graceful honest pride  
 Beheld her seated by his side,  
 While Gaul and all our chiefs around  
 No pause from admiration found;  
 But wonder-struck they gazed.  
 No wandering thought their bosoms crossed,  
 Their hearts were gone, their senses lost,  
 Enraptured and amazed.  
 O'ercome by beauty's potent spell  
 That opens heaven and conquers hell.†

\* Vultus nimium lubricus (*lucidus* ?) aspici.—HOB.

† Thus the aged senators of Troy were struck with admiration of Helen, when they compared her to the Immortals, and said

Αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῆς εἰς ὧπα εἰκεν.

IL. III., 158.

They cry'd, No wonder such celestial charms,  
 For nine long years have set the world in arms;  
 What winning graces! what majestic mien!  
 She moves a Goddess, and she looks a Queen!

Pope.

—Her angel's face

As the bright eye of heaven shined bright,  
 And made a sunshine in the shady place,  
 Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

Spenser.

“At a party given by Abd-ur-rahman to Mr. Layard, at Nimroud, “the host was in raptures with the beauty of the French lady, and whispered to Mr. Layard—Wallah, she is the sister of the sun! What would you have more beautiful than that?”

## V.

Then Finn, of aspect sweet and clear,  
Said—"Maiden, fondly would we hear,  
From what strange land you hither came—  
Your rank, your lineage, and your name."

"The daughter of that king am I,  
Whose realms beneath the ocean lie ;

And this my story brief,  
Through every land I speed my way,  
That sees the glorious light of day,

In quest of Erin's chief."

"And, daughter, what the cause declare  
That leads a maid so young, so fair,  
Alone and far from friendly home,  
Unguarded through the world to roam?"

"Great chief, all chiefs excelling far ;  
(Thus spoke the maid of maids the star,)

To thee I suppliant bend ;

Do thou whom none on earth exceeds  
In generous, high, heroic deeds,

A helpless maid befriend.

Thy kind protection let me know  
And shield me from a potent foe."

"And who, in wrath and vengeance strong,  
Pursues thee and would do thee wrong?"

(The prudent chief replied.)

"Dismiss thy terrors—trust my arm—  
No foe on earth shall do thee harm—

And in my power confide.

When in just cause for aid implored,  
The Fenians wield no feeble sword."

"A hero bold—a man of might,  
Pursues me o'er both land and sea,  
Enflamed by love and jealous spite ;—

The son of Sora's king is he,  
Great Moira Borb, for such his name—  
Of weapons keen and far-spread fame.  
His suit I spurned, with solemn vows  
Ne'er to become his plighted spouse,

Though great his deeds—his darings high,  
And often crowned with victory ;  
But rather o'er wide ocean sail  
And refuge seek in Innisfail."

## VI.

Then Oscar boldly forward sprung,  
He who could curb a monarch's pride,  
And cried with indignation stung,  
" Ne'er shalt thou be his bride,  
No—ne'er, while Finn fulfils his vow,  
To Sora's prince a captive bow."

## VII.

Careering on a fiery steed,\*  
O'er the sea-foam with winged speed,  
E'en in the royal maiden's course,  
And urged with more than mortal force,  
A hero of gigantic mould,  
Shoreward advancing we behold.  
A dark plumed helm he wore ;  
Swung by his side a ponderous blade  
Made music roughly as it played ;  
A full orb'd shield he bore,  
And on its moonlike disk were seen  
Two polished javelins strong and keen.  
A chief thus armed and girt for fight  
Had ne'er before so charmed our sight.

## VIII.

Of noble form—of princely look—  
With majesty he rode—  
More rapid than the torrent brook,  
The war-horse he bestrode.

\* Here again Macpherson deviates from the original by saying that Borbar came, not on a fiery steed, but, in a more matter of fact style, in a ship. "Now, like a dreadful wave afar, appeared the ship of stormy Borbar, his masts high-bended over the sea behind their sheets of snow."



As nigh our wondering host he drew,  
 Forth from its sheath his faulchion flew,  
 And brandished proudly o'er his head  
 A fiery halo round him spread.  
 On him our eager looks were bent  
 In silent deep astonishment,  
 As on he came in splendour bright  
 Of sparkling burnished mail,  
 Like the red meteor of the night  
 That shoots across the vale.  
 In Erin ne'er before was seen  
 A chief of such heroic mien ;  
 So skilled in battle's fierce career,  
 To govern steed and handle spear.  
 So proud his looks—as if alone  
 'Twas his to call the world his own.

## IX.

“ Is that the mighty prince, declare,  
 Who hence would force thee, maiden fair ? ”  
 (Said Finn, our warriors' pride)  
 “ He who front far o'er sea and land,  
 Pursues thee, and with ruthless hand  
 Would seize thee for his bride ? ”

MAID.—“ Alas ! 'tis he—too well I know—  
 He brings you Fians death and wo ;  
 And, maugre all your firm array,  
 Will bear me hence his prize away. ”

## X.

Stept Oscar forth, and Gaul renowned,  
 The foremost still in conflict found,  
 To cross the warrior in his path,  
 And guard the maiden from his wrath :  
 But like the whirlwind's speed,  
 Or lightning shaft of fire,  
 Upon his magic steed  
 He pass'd them in his ire,

To seize the maid, in furious mood,  
E'en as by noble Finn she stood.

## XI.

Hurled with the force that heroes wield,  
Forth Gaul his javelin sent ;  
It struck the warrior's bossy shield,  
And into fragments rent.  
With equal force by wrath impelled,  
Its course brave Oscar's javelin held ;  
'Twas from his left hand sped,  
And hardened by the strength of flame  
Pierced through the gallant war-steed's fra  
And stretched him with the dead.  
A high achievement great and bold  
As e'er adorned the times of old !\*

## XII.

Though in his path adventurous crost,  
With shattered shield and war-steed lost,  
With madly-brave, unconquered soul,  
That never knew or brooked control,  
He challenged of our gallant men  
The bravest, best, two score and ten,  
To meet him hand to hand.  
Two score and ten, his might to try,  
While I with Finn stood watchful by,  
Against him took their stand ;  
All clothed in brightly burnished mail ;  
All fierce the victor to assail.

## XIII.

Now loud the din of combat rose,  
As nobly stood against such foes

\* Not equal, however, to that of Orlando, who killed a horse with his fist.

"He turned, and with his fist so smote the horse,  
As made him ly on ground a senselesse corse.

*Book xxix., Stan. 61.*

The prince of high renown,  
With strength and skill, on right and left,  
Their corslets, helms, and shields he cleft,  
And struck th' assailants down.  
Nine chiefs laid prostrate on the ground  
Victorious he in fetters bound,  
Though hard the task, and proud the boast,  
To bind the weakest of our host.  
But oh ! it grieves my soul to tell,  
That Flann the son of Morna fell.  
Not one, who in that conflict burned,  
Ungashed, unwounded, back returned ;  
Nor had a man been left to bring  
The dismal tidings to our king,  
But all had sunk in night ;  
Unless they in collected power,  
Upon him rained an iron shower,  
And waged a distant fight.  
For none that met him hand to hand,  
His power terrific could withstand,  
So quick, so strong, with stroke on stroke,  
Their arms he into shivers broke.

## XIV.

Then Gaul, great hero of the field,  
Who ne'er was known to blench or yield,  
Though oft in conflict tried ;  
Still prizing glory more than life,  
In single fight, to end the strife  
The haughty foe defied—  
They met, as meet two torrent floods,  
Or whirlwinds echoing through the woods  
And glancing like the lightning's flash,  
Their swords reverberate clash for clash,  
And whirled in many a sparkling gyre,  
Their temper tell in streams of fire.

## XV.

Whoe'er that contest fierce had seen,  
 Would say 'twas terrible and keen,  
 So fierce, so strong, each tempered blade,  
 The game of death and glory played,  
     Till blood began to flow ;  
 Their shining mail of good steel blue,  
 Was mantled with a crimson hue,  
     And crushed by many a blow,  
 Till pierced by one relentless thrust,  
 The prince of Sora sunk in dust—  
     Oh ! mournful is the tale.  
 Unhappy land ! oh shame and grief !  
 To see the fall of such a chief !  
     Alas ! that Innisfail  
 Was e'er seduced by woman's charms,  
 To mingle in the strife of arms.

## XVI.

In earth, beside the loud cascade,  
 The son of Sora's king we laid ;  
 And on each finger placed a ring  
 Of gold, by mandate of our king ;  
 Such honours to the brave we give,  
 And bid their memory ever live.\*

\* The Fenians generously mourned for their slain enemies. Swaran made no vain request when he said to his conqueror Fingal—"Let thy bards mourn those who fell. Let Erin give the sons of Lochlin to earth. Raise high the mossy stones of their fame ; that the children of the north hereafter may behold the place where their fathers fought. The hunter may say when he leans on a mossy tomb, here Fingal and Swaran fought, the heroes of other years. Thus hereafter shall he say, our fame shall last for ever."

It was usual with the ancient Irish, as with other nations, to deposit in the tomb some such articles as indicated the occupation or favorite pursuit of the deceased, or the honor in which he was held by his survivors. Hence Macpherson's Ossian says to Oscar—"Remember, my son, to place this sword, this bow, the horn of my deer, within that dark and narrow house whose mark is one grey stone."

In the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. II., p. 40, J. Huband Smith, Esq., gives an account of a tomb found by the sea shore near Larne, which may remind us of the burial place of the prince of Sora. It contained the skeleton of a man with various weapons and ornaments, viz., a sword, the iron head of a lance, an elegantly formed pin. "The sword was placed



## XVII.

The daughter of the king who reigned  
 In realms beneath the main,  
 In Almhuin's friendly court remained  
 With Finn and his princely train,  
 Nor sought her home until the sun,  
 Through heaven, his annual course had run.

## XVIII.

Six months did Gaul our chief renowned,  
 In feats of arms still victor found,  
 Repose beneath the leech's art,  
 And all the skill the stars impart,  
 Till health his wonted strength restored,  
 And healed the gashes of the sword.

## XIX.

But what to me can youth restore,  
 Or heal the wounds that I deplore ?

across the breast of the skeleton, its hilt towards the right hand. These remains, it is stated, may be referred to that remote period when the use of brass or bronze was succeeded by iron and steel, in the manufacture of offensive weapons, while it was yet retained in the lighter works of ornament."

Laoghair, monarch of Ireland in the fifth century, was interred at Tara, in a standing position, spear in hand, with his shield of valour, his face to the south, as if bidding defiance to the Lagenians, the hereditary enemies of his family. See Dr. Petrie's Essay on Tara, and Notes to Geraghty's Edition of the Annals of the Four Masters, a volume replete with valuable Irish Antiquarian learning.

In May, 1838, an ancient tomb was discovered in the Phoenix Park, in which were found a flint arrow head, four sepulchral vases containing ashes of burned bone—two perfect skeletons, and under each skull considerable quantities of small shells *nerita littoralis*, each rubbed down to form a second hole, that they might be strung like beads. Were the shells intended to mark the maritime profession of the occupants when living ? But what is a tomb like this compared to that one on the banks of the Suir, which is 25 feet long, lined with huge flags, and having at the head and foot enormous stones 16 feet high ? This is the resting place of Ceadach the Great, the only son of the king of the hills, who came on "an enchanted horse, by means of which he annihilated space"—to engage the redoubtable champion Goll in single combat. The great Ceadach was pierced to the heart—but the horse, more lucky than the steed of Moira Borb, escaped, and immediately flew to his father's palace.—*Trans. of the Kilkenny Arch. Society*, p. 19.

Alas ! that maiden's blooming face  
To whole or wounded yields no grace.  
No healing balm bright eyes bestow,  
No solace to an old man's woe.  
But now since Memory's powers decay,  
And strength and spirit fail,  
Time warns to cease my vocal lay,  
And end my little tale.\*

\* Ossian often dwells with melancholy pleasure on the days of his youth, and laments the changes produced on himself by time and the infirmities of age. Macpherson's taste for the pathetic led him to introduce this topic with beauty and feeling. In the conclusion of the "Songs of Selma," the aged bard is represented as thus pouring forth his elegiac strains, in sad remembrance of the past, and gloomy anticipation of the future.—"Such were the words of the bards in the days of song; when the king heard the music of harps, the tales of other times! The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice of Cona! (i. e. Ossian) the first among a thousand bards! But age is now on my tongue: my soul has failed! I hear, at times, the ghosts of bards and learn their pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind. I hear the call of years! They say as they pass along why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame! Roll on, ye dark-brown years; ye bring no joy on your course! Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has failed. My voice remains, like a blast, that roars, lonely, on a sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid."

# THE LAY

## OF THE

### CHASE OF SLIEVE GUILLIN.

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ARGUMENT.—The lay commences by Ossian asking Patrick if he ever heard the tale of the Chase, and on receiving an answer in the negative, accompanied with a request that it may be told truly, he feels indignant at the suspicion that he, or any of Fionna Eironn, could ever deviate from the strictest veracity, and retaliates by declaring how much he prized his former friends, whose virtues he records, beyond Patrick and all his psalm-singing fraternity. Patrick, in reply, exhorts him not to indulge in a strain of panegyric which borders on blasphemy, and extols the power of that great Being by whom all the Fenian race had been destroyed. The mention of his friends' extinction calls forth a fresh burst of indignation from Ossian, and leads him to compare the pleasures of the days gone by, with the melancholy occupations of psalm-singing and fasting. Patrick requests him to cease and not incur the impiety of comparing Finn with the Creator of the Universe. Ossian replies in a style more indignant, and after reciting a number of the glorious exploits of the Fenians, asks by what achievements of his Deity they can be matched. The saint, justly shocked by such daring, accuses him of frenzy, and tells him that Finn and his host have been doomed to hell-fire by that God whom he blasphemes; but this only provokes Ossian to make a comparison between Finn's generosity and the divine vengeance; and as for himself, it is a sufficient proof of his sanity that he allows Patrick and his friends to wear their heads. Patrick, to end the controversy, requests him to proceed with the promised tale. Ossian complies, and informs him that while the Fenian heroes were feasting in the towers of Almuin (*Allen*) Finn, having withdrawn from the company, spied a young doe, and pursued her with his two favourite hounds, as far as Slieve Guillin, where she suddenly disappeared. While he and his hounds are left in perplexity, he hears a sound of lamentation, and looking round espies a female of surpassing beauty, whom he accosts, and, with friendly solicitude, asks the cause of her grief. She replies that she has dropped her ring into the adjoining lake, and adjures him, as a true knight, to dive into the water to find and restore her lost treasure. He complies and succeeds; and while handing her the ring, is suddenly metamorphosed into a grey and withered old man.

Meantime the absence of their chief begins to create some fears for his safety in the breasts of the Fenians. Caoilte expresses an apprehension that he is irrecoverably lost, when Conan, rejoicing at the idea, boasts that he will in future be their chief. The Fenians having laughed his arrogance to scorn, proceed in quest of Finn, and discover the old man, who whispers in the ear of Caoilte the story of his strange metamorphosis. Conan, on hearing it, waxes valiant, and utters bitter reproaches against Finn and the Fenians. He is rebuked by Caoilte; but still continuing to vituperate and boast, he is answered at last by the sword of Oscar. The Fenians interfere, and having put an end to the strife, and learned the cause of Finn's misfortune, they search the secret recesses of Slieve Guillin, and at length find the enchantress, who presents a cup to Finn, of which he drinks, and is restored to his former strength and beauty.

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## I.

OSSIAN.—O son of Calphruin ! thou whose ear  
Sweet chant of psalms delights to hear,  
Hast thou c'er heard the tale,  
How Finn pursued the lonely chase,  
Apart from all the Fenian race,  
Brave sons of Inisfail ?

PATRICK.—O royal born ! whom none exceeds  
In moving song or hardy deeds,  
That tale, to me as yet untold,  
Though far renown'd, do thou unfold  
In truth severely wise,  
From fancy's wanderings far apart :  
For what is Fancy's glozing art  
But falsehood in disguise ?

## II.

OSSIAN.—O ! ne'er on gallant Fenian race  
Fell falsehood's imputation base :  
By faith of deeds, by strength of hand,  
By trusty might of battle-brand,  
We spread afar our glorious fame,  
And victors from each conflict came.



Ne'er sat a monk in holy chair,  
 Devote to chanting hymn and prayer,  
     More true than the Fenians bold :  
 No chief like Finn, the world around,  
 Was e'er to bards so gen'rous found,  
     With gifts of ruddy gold.  
 If lived the son of Morni fleet,  
     Who ne'er for treasure burned ;  
 Or Duiné's son to woman sweet,  
     Who ne'er from battle turned,  
 But fearless with his single glaive  
 A hundred foemen dared to brave :  
 If lived Macgaree stern and wild,  
     That hero of the trenchant brand ;  
 Or Caoilte, Ronan's witty child,  
     Of liberal heart and open hand ;  
 Or Oscar, once my darling boy,  
 Thy psalms would bring me little joy.  
 If lived, the Fenian deeds to sing,  
     Sweet Fergus with his voice of glee ;  
 Or Daire, who trilled a faultless string,  
     Small pleasure were thy bells to me.  
 If lived the dauntless little Hugh,  
     Or Fillan, courteous, kind and meek,  
 Or Conan bald, for whom the dew  
     Of sorrow yet is on my cheek,  
 Or that small dwarf whose power could steep  
 The Fenian host in death-like sleep—  
 More sweet one breath of theirs would be  
 Than all thy clerks' sad psalmody.

## III.

PATRICK.—Thy chiefs renowned extol no more,  
 O son of kings—nor number o'er ;  
 But low, on bended knee, record  
 The power and glory of the Lord ;  
 And beat the breast, and shed the tear,  
 And still his holy name revere,  
 Almighty, by whose potent breath  
 Thy vanquished Fenians sleep in death.

OSSIAN.—Alas ! for Ossian—dire the tale !  
 No music in thy voice I hear ;  
 Not for thy wrathful God I wail,  
 But for my Fenians dear.  
 Thy God ! a rueful God I trow,  
 Whose love is earned by want and woe !  
 Since came thy dull psalm-singing crew,  
 How rapid away our pastimes flew,  
 And all that charmed the soul !  
 Where now are the royal gifts of gold,  
 The flowing robe with its satin fold,  
 And the heart-delighting bowl ?  
 Where now the feast, and the revel high,  
 And the jocund dance and sweet minstrelsy,  
 And the steed loud-neighing in the morn,  
 With the music sweet of hound and horn,  
 And well-armed guards of coast and bay ?  
 All, all like a dream have passed away ;  
 And now we have clerks with their holy qualms,  
 And books, and bells, and eternal psalms,  
 And fasting—that waster gaunt and grim,  
 That strips of all beauty both body and limb.

## IV.

PATRICK.—Oh ! cease this strain, nor longer dare,  
 Thy Finn, or Finn's bold chiefs, compare  
 With him who reigns in matchless might,  
 The King of kings enthroned in light.  
 'Tis he who frames the heavens and earth ;  
 'Tis he who nerves the hero's hand ;  
 'Tis he who calls fair fields to birth,  
 And bids each blooming branch expand :  
 He gives the fishy streams to run,  
 And lights the moon and radiant sun.  
 What deeds like these, though great his fame,  
 Have e'er adorned thy hero's name ?

OSSIAN.—To weeds and grass his princely eye  
 My sire ne'er fondly turned ;

But he raised his country's glory high,  
 When the strife of warriors burned.  
 To shine in games of strength and skill,  
 To breast the torrent from the hill,  
 To lead the van of the bannered host—  
 These were his deeds, and these his boast.  
 Where was thy God, when o'er the tide,  
 Two heroes hither bore,  
 Of Lochlin, king of ships, the bride;  
 And carnage heaped the shore?  
 When Tailk on Fenians hacked his brand,  
 'Twas not thy God's, but Oscar's, hand,  
 That hero prostrate laid;  
 When rough-voiced Magnus swept the coast,  
 If lived thy God, the Fenian host  
 Had triumphed by his aid.  
 When Aillan, Anver's son of fame,  
 Round Tara rolled the bickering flame,  
 Not by thy King's, but Oscar's, glaive,  
 The warrior sank in a bloody grave.  
 When haughty Dearg advanced in pride,  
 With his shields of gold, o'er Lochlin's tide,  
 Why lingered then thy cloud-borne Lord  
 To save our host from his slaughtering sword?  
 Oh! glorious deeds arise in crowds,  
 Of the gallant Fenian band;  
 But what is achieved by thy King of the clouds—  
 Where reddened he his hand?

## V.

PATRICK.—Here let this vain contention rest,  
 For frenzy, Bard, inspires thy breast.

\* ————— *rubente*  
*Dextera sacras jaculatus arces*  
 Terruit urbem.—HON.

————— Heaven's eternal Sire,  
 With *red right-arm*, at his own temples hurl'd  
 His thunders, and alarm'd a guilty world.—FRANCIS.

Some of Ossian's expressions might justly shock the piety of St. Patrick. But let it be remembered that Ossian is no convert to Christianity; on the contrary, he is opposed to it, principally because it had put an end to his favourite pastimes.

Supreme in bliss God ever reigns :  
Thy Finn now groans in hell's domains—  
In penal fire—in lasting chains.

OSSIAN.—Small glory to thy potent King  
His chains and fires on our host to bring!  
Oh! how unlike our generous chief,  
Who, if thy King felt wrong or grief,  
Would soon in arms, with valour strong,  
Avenge the grief, redress the wrong.  
Whom did the Fenian king e'er see  
In thralldom, pain, or fear,  
But his ready gold would set him free,  
Or the might of his victor spear?  
This arm, did frenzy touch my brain,  
Their heads from thy clerks would sever,  
Nor thy crozier here, nor white book remain,  
Nor thy bells be heard for ever.

## VI.

PATRICK.—O son of kings, adorned with grace,  
'Twere music to my ear,  
Of noble Finn and his wondrous chase,  
The promised tale to hear.

OSSIAN.—Well,—though afresh my bosom bleeds,  
Remembering days of old—  
When I think of my sire and his matchless deeds—  
Yet shall the tale be told.

## VII.

While the Fenian bands, at Almhuin's towers,  
In the hall of spears passed the festive hours,  
The goblet crowned, with chessmen played,\*  
Or gifts for gifts of love repaid;

\* The game of chess is repeatedly noticed in connexion with various historical incidents in the early history of Ireland. Theophilus O'Flanagan, in a note to his translation of *Deirdre*, an ancient Irish tale published in the



From the reckless throng Finn stole unseen,  
 When he spied a young doe on the heath-clad green  
 With agile spring draw near:  
 On Sceolan and Bran, his nimble hounds,  
 He whistles aloud, and away he bounds  
 In chase of the hornless deer.  
 With his hounds alone and his trusty blade,  
 The son of Luno's\* skill,  
 On the track of the flying doe he strayed  
 To Guillin's pathless hill.

transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin, speaks of it as a "military game that engages the mental faculties, like mathematical science." O'Flaherty's *Ogygia* states that Cathir, the 120th king of Ireland, left among his bequests to Crimthan "two chess-boards with their chess-men distinguished with their specks and power: on which account he was constituted master of the games in Leinster."

In the first book of Homer's *Odyssey* the suitors are described as amusing themselves with the game of chess:—

*With rival art and ardour in their mein,  
 At chess they vie to captivate the queen,  
 Divining of their loves.*

In Pope's translation there is a learned note on the subject, to which the curious reader is referred; and also to a passage in Vallancey's *Essay on the Celtic Language*.

The Welch appear to have been passionately addicted to this game, as appears from the frequent notice of it in the *MABINOGION*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest. Some of the chess boards described in that work were magnificent, and endowed with magical properties.

When Peredur entered the hall of the castle, "he beheld a chess board in the hall, and the chessmen were playing against each other, by themselves. And the side that he favoured lost the game, and thereupon the others set up a shout, as though they had been living men."

Among the thirteen precious things of the Island of Britain was the chess board of Gwenddolen, the celebrated beauty of Arthur's court. "When the men were placed upon it, they would play of themselves. The chess board was of gold and the men of silver." "In the romance of Sir Gaheret, that champion is entertained in the enchanted castle of a beautiful fairy, who engages him in a party at chess, in a large hall, where flags of black and white marble form the chequer, and the pieces, consisting of massive statues of gold and silver, move at the touch of the magic rod held by the player." In the Irish version of Nennius, translated for the Irish Archaeological Society by James Henthorn Todd, D.D., M.R.I.A., additional notes, p. xvi., the Roman Emperor Maximus is described as having a wonderful dream "of a fine city, and in it a hall or palace of great splendour; and in the hall were two bay-haired youths playing chess, on a chess board of silver, with chessmen of gold. They were dressed in black, with frontlets of red gold on their hair and precious stones therein. At the foot of the column supporting the hall sat a grey-haired man on an ivory throne, with golden bracelets, chain, and frontlet, and with a golden chess board on his breast, and in his hand a golden wand and a steel saw; and he was carving chessmen. A maiden sat opposite to him in a golden chair, arrayed in white silk and jewels. Maximus sat down in the chair beside her, and threw his arms round her neck; and at this moment of his dream awoke."

This was a dream—but when the emperor conquered Britain the whole of it was realized.

\* *Luno*, a celebrated fabricator of swords.

But when he came to its hard-won height,  
 No deer appeared in view;  
 If east or west she had sped her flight  
 Nor hounds nor huntsman knew.  
 But those sprang westward o'er the sod,  
 While Finn still eastward press'd—  
 Why did not pity touch thy God  
 To see them thus distress'd?

## VIII.

There while he gazes anxious round,  
 Sudden he hears a doleful sound,  
 And by a lake of crystal sheen;  
 Spies a nymph of loveliest form and mien :\*  
 Her cheeks wore the rose's crimson light,  
 Her lips the red berry's glow;  
 Her neck, as the sea-cliff's marble,† bright,  
 In the sunny ray, was soft and white  
 As a wreath of driven snow.  
 More fair than the water-lily's vest,  
 Or Cana's down, rose her full-orbed breast;  
 Curling gold were her locks, and her sparkling eyes  
 Like radiant stars in the freezing skies.

\* The reader will understand that the doe has now assumed the form of a nymph of attractive beauty. In a note to the Irish version of Nennius it is mentioned that "fawns and deer occupy a prominent place in Irish hagiography"—(and it may be added in Irish poetry and romance). They were the subjects of many miracles. St. Berach of Cluain Coirphthe, had a deer which was sent to him miraculously to carry his luggage, when he set out in search of a suitable place for the foundation of his monastery. Deer, at the prayer of St. Attracta, were made to carry timber to build the castle of the tyrant king of Connaught. A fawn, together with other wild animals, lived with St. Kieran of Saigher, "manserunt mitissime apud eum et obidiebant ei secundum jussionem viri Dei in omnibus quasi Monachi." A wild deer came daily to St. Ernanian to be milked. A deer brought St. Columbkille his books which he had lost. St. Patrick found a deer suckling her fawn in the spot where the northern altar of the cathedral of Armagh now stands, and, taking up the fawn, the deer followed him, 'velut mitissima ovis.' On another occasion St. Patrick and his companions passed through the hostile ambuscade of King Le-gaire to Tara, the Saint and his followers appearing to their enemies like eight deer, and the boy Benen, like a fawn, carrying a small bundle on his shoulders, which contained the sacred Bible of the saint."

The Irish version of Nennius, translated for the Irish Archaeological Society, Dub., 1848, pp. 183, 184, Note.

† Literally, *as lime*.

And from them such strange witchery glanced  
 As thrilled each nerve, ensnared, entranced,  
 With magic power and cunning skill,  
 Bending the spirit to her will.  
 Such witchery, Sage, though cold thou art,  
 Would melt, subdue, and fire thy heart.

## IX.

Nigh to the nymph of golden hair  
 With courteous grace he drew—  
 “O hast thou seen, enchantress fair,  
 My hounds their game pursue?”\*

Nymph.—“Thy hounds I saw not in the chase,  
 O noble prince of the Fenian race;  
 But I have cause of woe more deep,  
 For which I linger here and weep.”

FINN.—“O, hast thou lost a husband dear?  
 Falls for a darling son thy tear,  
 Or daughter of thy heart?  
 Sweet, soft-palmed nymph, the cause reveal  
 To one who can thy sorrows feel,  
 Perchance can ease thy smart?  
 The maid of tresses fair replied—  
 “A precious ring I wore;†  
 Dropped from my finger in the tide,  
 Its loss I now deplore;

\* This will remind the reader of a similar question by Venus in the first Æneid:—

—— Heus inquit, juvenes monstrate mearum  
 Vidistis usquam hic errantem forte sororum  
 Succinctam pharetra, et maculosæ tegmine lyncis,  
 Aut spumantis apri cursum clamore prementem?—ÆN. I. 325.

Ho, strangers! have you lately seen, she said,  
 One of my sisters, like myself array'd,  
 Who crossed the lawn or in the forest stray'd?  
 A painted quiver at her back she bore;  
 Varied with spots, a lynx's hide she wore;  
 And at full cry pursued the tusky boar.—DRYDEN.

† An instinctive impulse of gallantry might have induced Finn to comply with the damsel's request—but independently of this he was bound to compliance by the laws of knighthood. The ring lost by the enchantress might

But by the sacred vows that bind  
 Each brave and loyal knight,  
 I now adjure thee, Chief, to find  
 My peerless jewel bright."

be of inestimable value on account of its occult qualities, such as those possessed by a memorable ring celebrated by Ariosto, the great poet of romantic poetry—

—Uno anello  
 Che fu rubato in India a una Regina—  
 Di tal virtù, che chi nel dito ha quello,  
 Contra il mal de gl'incanti ha medicina.  
 "A ring there is which from an Indian queene  
 Was stole sometime, of price and virtue great:  
 This ring can make a man to go unseene,  
 This ring can all enchantments quite defeat."

The ring of our enchantress, however, does not appear to have had any such virtue. The change produced on Finn was caused by the waters of the lake.

Since the days of Gyges, mentioned in the Clio of Herodotus, certain rings have been held in great estimation in romantic, and even in real, history. The ring of Ariosto's Indian queen was to be taken by force from its possessor without losing a moment of time,

"lest he convey  
 The ring into his mouth and so thereby  
 Out of your sight he vanish quite away."

Such ring by rendering the wearer invisible, and by transporting him instantaneously wherever he desired, invested him with a sort of ubiquity and omniscience. In the ancient metrical tale of Florice and Blancheflour, the queen presents her son with a ring of such marvellous virtues—

"She cast her hand to her fingre  
 And drouz thereof a riche ringe;"

and as she presented it to her son, assured him that while he wore it, he should suffer no injury from fire, water, iron, or steel—

"Ne iron, ne stel schal derie the."

In true history as well as in fiction, a ring is the instrument of marvellous events. The ring of Essex might have saved his head from the block—that of Hannibal avenged the calamities he inflicted on the Romans.

Cannarum vindex ac tanti sanguinis ultor

*Annulus.* JUVENAL.

The vengeance due to Cannæ's fatal field,  
 And floods of human gore, a ring shall yield.

*Gifford.*

When ring-money was in circulation, it had, of course, all the omnipotence attributed to gold; and it can be easily understood how it could work marvels equalling if not surpassing those of the most potent enchanter—

Scilicet uxorem cum dote, fidemque, et amicos,  
 Et genus, et formam, regina pecunia donat;  
 Ac bene nummatum decorat Suadela Venusque.

*Hob.*

"By this great Empress Wealth is all bestow'd  
 A rich and honest wife, and every good,  
 As beauty, friends, and nobleness of blood:  
 The rich and moneyed man hath every grace,  
 Persuasion in his tongue, and Venus in his face."

*Creech.*



He feels her adjuration's ties;  
Disrobes each manly limb,  
And for the smooth-palmed princess hies  
The gulfy lake to swim.  
Five times deep-diving down the wave,  
Through every cranny, nook, and cave,  
With care he searches round and round,  
Till the golden ring at length he found;  
But scarce to shore the prize could bring,  
When by some blasting ban—  
Ah! piteous tale—the Fenian king  
Grew a withered, grey, old man!

## X.

Meanwhile the Fenians passed the hours  
In the hall of spears, at Almhuin's towers;  
The goblet crowned, with chessmen played,  
Or gifts for gifts of love repaid,  
When Caoilte rose and asked in grief,  
“Ye spearmen, where is our gallant chief?  
In chase he went of a mottled doe—  
A borrowed form I ween—  
A sorceress that may work his wo,  
And change his noble mien;  
By witchery's charms, and wicked skill  
Transform, and brutalize, or kill.  
Lost, lost, I fear, is the Fenians' boast;  
Lost the great leader of our host!  
Whom shall we then our chieftain name,  
To lead to victory and fame?”  
Bald Conan spoke—“A sweeter sound  
Ne'er tingled on my ear;  
If Finn be lost, may he not be found  
Till end the distant year!  
But, Caoilte of the nimble feet,  
Ye shall not want a chieftain meet;  
In me, till the fate of Finn be told,  
The leader of your host behold!”

Although the Fenian bands were torn  
With agony severe,  
We burst into a laugh of scorn,  
Such arrogance to hear.

## XI.

To urge the quest, we then decree,  
Of Finn and his hounds, the joyous three  
That still to triumph led;  
And soon from Almuin's halls away,  
With Caoilte, I, and our dark array,  
North to Slew Guillin sped.  
There, as with searching glance the eye  
O'er all the prospect rolled,  
Beside the lake a wretch we spy,  
Poor, withered, grey, and old.  
Disgust and horror touched the heart  
To see the bones, all fleshless, start  
In a frame so lank and wan;  
We thought him some starved fisher torn  
From the whelming stream, by famine worn,  
And left but the wreck of man.  
We asked if he had chanced to see  
A swift-paced chieftain go,  
With two fleet hounds across the lea,  
Behind a fair young doe.  
He gave us back no answer clear,  
But in the nimble Caoilte's ear  
He breathed his tale—O, tale of grief!—  
That in him we saw the Fenian chief!  
Three sudden shouts to hear the tale  
Our host raised loud and shrill—  
The badgers started in the vale,  
The wild deer on the hill.

## XII.

Then Conan fierce unsheathed his sword,  
And curs'd the Fenian king and his horde.

"If true thy tale," he cries,  
 "This blade thy head would off thee smite;  
 For ne'er my valour in the fight,  
 Nor prowess didst thou prize.  
 Would that like thee, both old and weak,  
 Were the Fenians all, that my sword might reek  
 In their craven blood, and their cairns might swell  
 On the grassy lea!—for since Cumhail fell,  
 O'ercome in fateful strife,  
 By Morni's son of the golden shields,  
 Our sons thou hast sent to foreign fields,  
 Or of freedom reft and life."  
 "Bald, senseless wretch! our care is due  
 To Finn's sad state, or thy mouth should rue  
 A speech so vile, and soon atone  
 With shattered teeth and fractured bone:"  
 Indignant Caoilte spoke.  
 With equal wrath said Oscar stern,  
 "Audacious babbler! silence learn—  
 What foe e'er felt thy stroke?"  
 Then Conan thus—"Vain boy! be dumb,  
 Or tell what deed of fame  
 Did e'er thy Finn, but gnaw his thumb\*  
 Until the marrow came?  
 We, not Clan-Boske, did the deed,  
 Whene'er we saw the foemen bleed.  
 Behind thee, Ossian, may thy son  
 A puling, whining, chanter run,  
 And bear white book and bell.  
 His words I scorn—in open fight,  
 Which of us twain is in the right  
 Let swords, not speeches, tell."  
 Him answered Oscar's trusty steel;  
 When craven Conan, taught to feel,  
 And trembling for his worthless life,  
 The Fenians prayed to end the strife,

\* A note in Miss Brooke's translations informs us that "Finn was reproached with deriving all his courage from his foreknowledge of events, and chewing his thumb for prophetic information."

And stay rough Oscar's blade.  
Between them swift the Fenians rushed,  
The rising storm of battle hushed,  
And Oscar's vengeance stayed.

## XIII.

Of Cumhail's son then Caoilte sought  
What wizard Danan foe had wrought  
Such piteous change—and Finn replied,  
“ 'Twas Guillin's daughter—me she bound  
By a sacred spell to search the tide  
Till the ring she lost was found.”  
Then Conan spoke in altered mood—  
“ Safe may we ne'er depart,  
Till we see restored our chieftain good,  
Or Guillin rue his art!”  
Then close around our chief we throng,  
And bear him on our shields along.

## XIV.

Eight days and nights the caverned seat  
Where Guillin made his dark retreat  
We dig with sleepless care;  
Pour through its windings close, the light,  
Till we see, in all her radiance bright,  
Spring forth th' enchantress fair.  
A chalice she bore of angled mould,\*  
And sparkling rich with gems and gold;  
Its brimming fount in the hand she placed  
Of Finn, whose looks small beauty graced.  
Feeble he drinks—the potion speeds  
Through every joint and pore;  
To palsied age fresh youth succeeds—  
Finn of the swift and slender steeds  
Becomes himself once more.

\* Quadrangular—the ancient cup of the Irish, called *meadar*. Specimens of it may be seen in the Antiquarian Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.



His shape, his strength, his bloom returns,  
And in manly glory bright he burns !\*

## XV.

We gave three shouts that rent the air—  
The badgers fled the vale:  
And now, O sage of frugal care,  
Hast thou not heard the tale ?

\* The cup of our enchantress produces effects quite the reverse of those wrought by the cup of her sister Circe—

“ Who knows not Circe,  
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup  
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,  
And downward fell into a grovelling swine ?”

Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,  
Th’ express resemblance of the gods, is changed  
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,  
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat.

*Comus.*

Slieve Guillin, the scene of the preceding lay, is said to be the highest mountain in Ulster. with the exception of Slieve Donard, the highest of the mountains of Mourne. In Sir Charles Coote’s statistical survey, it is stated that, “ Perhaps a bolder prospect is not presented in our island than from its summit, comprising a great extent of country; the lakes and streams, the several towns and well cultivated demesnes, together with the bay of Dundalk, where the declivity is terminated. Nigh the summit is a small amphitheatre containing a lake, and at the highest point, a cairn of stones forming the roof of a cavern, manifestly the work of art, affording a safe retreat to robbers.” The cairn is said in Louthiana to be “ 300 feet in circumference; and the cave to be like those dedicated to the Danish gods, and probably to Thor.” General Vallancey says that “ all our mountains were dedicated to some heathen Deity, and still retain the names; as Sliabh Eachtai (or Hecate), Sliabh *Góilíne* (one of the deities of the Pagan Irish—chief of the Fawns of the Woods, Satyrs, Sylvan deities), *Góilíne*, a word now used to express the Devil.”—Anc. Hist. of Ireland, pp. 514, 517.

The learned antiquary thinks the Irish word Sliabh (or Slieve) a mountain, is derived from the Chaldee *Slabb* arsit, combussit, “ because on such high places altars were erected, and the holy fire kept burning, till reformed by the fire-tower.”—p. 463.

The following legend, on which the Lay of the Chase seems to be founded, has been kindly presented to the author by Mr. Nicholas Kearney.

“ Miluchradh and Aine, or Aigne, two sisters, daughters of Cualan of Cuailgne, of the Tuatha De Danan race, fell in love with Fionn Mac Cubhaill. Aine declared in the banquetting hall of Allen, before all the guests, in order to secure the affection of the hero, that her husband should never become hoary or old. It would appear from the sequel that she succeeded by her announcement, in out-rivalling her sister; for Miluchradh inflamed with jealousy, returned home, and, having summoned the chief Druids of her people to Slieve Guillin, caused them to form a druidic (*draoidheacht*) lake on the summit of the mountain, to wreak her vengeance on Fionn, and frustrate her sister’s prediction. The waters of this lake, which was called

Loch Dogradh, possessed the *buadha* (extraordinary or magical powers) of changing the hair grey, and rendering the frame old and weak, of all who bathed in them. The wicked Miluchradh having thus made her arrangements, waited an opportunity of enticing Fionn into her meshes; and having found him alone one day on the plain of Allen, she metamorphosed herself into a fawn, the better to beguile him and draw him to her druidic lake on Slieve Guillin. The remainder of the story is told in the poem.

It is rather singular that a faint notion of the powers said to be possessed by the waters of this lake, is still preserved in the traditions of the people. Old folks used to tell how some men were found daring enough to make an attempt to drain the lake, despite the warnings and admonitions of their more cautious neighbours to deter them—how a sudden wave splashed the most determined man among the labourers, just on the eve of accomplishing their object, while engaged on the brink of the lake, and how his auburn locks suddenly assumed a silvery hue! Another man was splashed on another occasion, but the hair of only one side of his head was changed, while the other still remained raven-dark as before. This is analogous to the case of Fionn; for, when he drank of the druidic *corra* or cup, half his hair only assumed its original colour; the Fenians then cried out that both colours became him well, and they advised him to forego the demand of having the colour wholly restored, and that it remained so until the day of his death. It seems that the notion still holds its place in popular belief, for a native of Forkhill, now residing in Dublin, told me about a man who met a similar fate about 20 years ago, while endeavouring to remove a stone on the margin of the lake. All these strange doings are said to be performed by the supernatural agency of Miluchradh, better known as the *Cailleach Biorar*, who is considered to be the guardian of the lake, and to reside to this day in a cave in the mountain. She is still much dreaded by the people in the vicinity.

This must be the fount alluded to by Giraldus Barry, though he states that it is in Munster, which is another of his mistakes. "Est fons in Momonia cujus aquis, si quis abluatur, statim canus efficitur."—Vid. Camb. Evers. p. 128, Ed. Celt. Soc.—[N. K.]

# THE LAY

OF

## THE CHASE OF GLENNASMOL.

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GLEN OF THE THRUSH—so called from the number, or, as has been said, from the remarkable size, of that sweet bird of song, probably the missel-thrush, the largest of the genus, by which it is frequented. This romantic glen is six or seven miles distant from Dublin, by the base of the dark and lofty mountain of Kippure, and the sources of the river Dodder. It is celebrated as the scene of some of the Fenian heroes' adventures, and particularly for the chase of a remarkable deer, the subject of one of the Ossianic minstrel's lays, which is here presented to the reader. For a literally verbal translation of this lay from the original Irish, the present versifier is indebted, as for many similar obligations, to Mr. Eugene Curry, Irish amanuensis to the Royal Irish Academy. He is also indebted to Mr. Nicholas Kearney, for a manuscript translation into English heroic verse by Matthew Graham, of the same poem, under the title of the GIANTESS. In a prefatory advertisement, that translator says that this poem "is in the mouth of almost every person who can speak the Irish language either complete, or in part;" and laments the inadequacy of any translation to match the expressive beauty of the original. Most translators say this of the works which they translate; and it is no doubt true that in every language there are certain beauties of expression which cannot be transferred and which can be seen and appreciated in their native dress only. As to these Fenian tales they would not move gracefully in English heroics. Such a dress would be too cumbersome—like the armour of Saul on the limbs of the stripling David. Chevy Chase would be sadly metamorphosed if fused into the heroics of genuine Epic song.

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### DUAN FIRST.

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ARGUMENT.—Patrick expresses the delight he feels in hearing the tales of old. Ossian, to gratify his wish, immediately proceeds to inform him how the Fenians had assembled, one rosy morn, to pursue the chase in Glennasmol—when they started a deer of singular appearance, having one side white as snow, the other black as coal. The hounds were immediately slipped, but had not long enjoyed the sport, till, with the

deer, they all vanished from the view. Wondering at their sudden disappearance, Finn consults his oracular thumb—and, in reply to some observations of Conan, declares that they shall never behold any of the hounds returning except Brann; who, soon after, comes back in a miserable plight, portending, by piteous moans, that a sad disaster had befallen the Fenians. Presently they behold a lovely female, who, approaching them, says she comes from the Princess of Greece, who had arrived at a neighbouring isle with her fleet richly laden with precious stores, and had provided a sumptuous banquet, to which she invited the Fenian chief and his heroes. They readily accept the invitation. When the banquet was concluded, and Finn was retiring, a woman of gigantic stature stood before him, crowned and robed like a queen, but of coarse and disgusting features—one side fair and the other dark as night. The princess courteously addressing Finn, declares that her ships, her treasures, her maidens, all are his, and herself his spouse for life. Finn makes a brief reply, declining to accept her proffered love. He says he cannot take for his wife a woman whom he had that morning beheld in the shape of a doe; and ends his reply by asking if his hounds were yet living. She answers that, with the exception of Brann, they were all bereft of life—that she had slain a multitude of his men, and would not depart till she had glutted her vengeance in the slaughter of the Fenians. To accomplish her design, she began to practise her incantations, charmed the Fenians to sleep, and then cut off the heads of a hundred men.

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I.

PATRICK.—Ossian, 'tis music to my ear  
Thy tales of olden time to hear;  
And chief of glorious victory won,  
In many a hard-fought field,  
By Oscar, thy heroic son,  
Ne'er known to flee or yield.

OSSIAN.—The Fenians, on a festive day,  
Assembled all in trim array,  
Finn with his son, young Fergus fair,  
Ossian, and Oscar, Ossian's pride,  
With Dermuid of the dark-brown hair,  
Bald Conan, and more chiefs beside.  
Ere from the cliffs the orient sun  
The mists to scatter had begun,  
To Glennasmol, to urge the chase  
We onward sped with rapid pace.



His dogs, impatient to be freed,  
In leash each Fenian led.  
Sgolán and Brann of matchless speed,  
To feats of hunting bred,  
Our noble Finn, serene and mild,  
Held in strong check tho' fierce and wild.  
And as they raised their joyous cry,  
Our hopes of gallant sport rose high.

## II.

Soon passed we, with our merry men,  
O'er the green hill that tops the glen,  
Where woods, in verdant bloom arrayed,  
Give rich variety of shade;  
Sweet birds their carols soft prolong,  
Far cliffs repeat the cuckoo's song;  
And oft, as down the valley floats  
The music of the thrush's notes,  
The hunter, though in full career,  
Stops short, in extasy to hear.

## III.

Then, through the glen's deep-winding rounds,  
We loosed with speed our nimble hounds:  
To slip his twelve Finn was not slack—  
His twelve, the noblest of the pack,  
Whose voice we heard more sweetly ring  
Than tones from harp's melodious string.

## IV.

We started soon a hornless doe,  
Strange sight! for her one side  
Was whiter than the driven snow,  
Or swan upon the tide;  
The other of a coal-black hue;  
And fleet as fleetest hawk she flew.

## V.

Then every man unleashed his hounds—

Finn slipt his Brann with speed ;  
And on they sprang with rapid bounds,  
Still hoping to succeed.

But while we watched their hurried flight,  
They all vanished from our sight.

Finn stood perplexed with strange amaze,  
As on their course he fixed his gaze,  
For ne'er before, since first she ran,  
Had chase escaped his matchless Brann.\*

\* *BRANN—a mountain stream*—Finn's favourite hound, so called on account of his rapidity and strength. He was celebrated above all his contemporaries for success in the chase—for when "a thousand dogs flew off at once, grey-bounding through the heath; a deer fell by every dog; three by the white-breasted Bran." He, or rather she, for Brann was feminine, was worthy to be regarded as the friend or rival of Cavall, King Arthur's dog, who "left all the other dogs behind him, and turned the stag," as we are informed in "Geraint the son of Erbin," one of the Mabinogion heroes. In the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin (1808) is the following description of Brann literally translated from the Irish:—

Yellow legs had Brann,  
Both her sides black and her belly white,  
A speckled back over her loins,  
And two crimson ears very red.

But this is as nothing compared to the description of John M'Donnel's hound, in the "Foray of Con O'Donnel"—"a spunky and delightful legend," as it is justly termed by the Literary Gazette of October 5, 1850, in its notice of "Ballads, Poems, and Lyrics, by Denis Florence M'Carthy:—

"As fly the shadows o'er the grass,  
He flies with step as light and sure;  
He hunts the wolf through Trostan pass,  
And starts the deer by Lisanoure.  
The music of the sabbath bells  
O'Con, has not a sweeter sound  
Than when along the valley swells  
The cry of John MacDonnel's hound.  
His stature tall, his body long,  
His back like night, his breast like snow,  
His fore leg pillar-like and strong,  
His hind-leg like a bended bow;  
Rough curling hair, head long and thin,  
His ear a leaf, so small and round.  
Not Bran the favourite hound of Fin  
Could rival John MacDonnel's hound."

Finn's two celebrated dogs, Sgeolan and Brann, were of the canine race only in appearance, being the son and daughter of Iollan Eachtach, son of the King of Ulster, and Tuirn, a lady of great personal charms, who had been united to Iollan, on the express condition that she should be returned to Finn, her near relative, whenever he should think proper to claim her—a condition which the prudent Finn deemed necessary, because he was

## VI.

As was his wont, when sore distressed,  
 His thumb oracular he pressed  
 Between his teeth ;—when Conan came  
 And asked where had the piebald game  
 Slunk out of view :—had treacherous bogs  
 Down swallowed all the sweet-mouthed dogs ?  
 Finn answered straight—oppressed with care,  
 “ Bald Conan, by thy hand I swear,  
 Not one of all the generous pack,  
 Save Brann, we e’er shall welcome back.”

## VII.

In cheerless melancholy mood  
 To lose their hounds, the Fenians stood  
 And then, too late, began to know  
 No chase for them was the hornless doe.

aware that Iollan was under the influence of a potent Leannan Sighe, or familiar spirit, named Osdealbh, who might incite him to treat his spouse unkindly. But his precaution was fruitless, for during Tuirin’s pregnancy, the Leannan Sighe, under an assumed name and character, contrived to meet her, and striking her with her dreadful *draoidheact* (druidical) wand, metamorphosed her into a female hound, that, in due time, brought forth a twin offspring. Osdealbh was prevailed on by Iollan to restore Tuirn to her proper shape, and she proposed to give the human frame to each of her progeny. But Finn, to whom they were presented, said he preferred having them as they were, and accordingly they retained their canine form, with human understanding, and became the illustrious dogs Sgeolan and Brann. For an ample account of the romance, of which this is but a meagre outline, the curious reader is referred to the *Feis Teacha Conan Cinsleibhe*.

Mr. Nicholas Kearney, who has kindly supplied the matter of this legend, thinks that in it “more is meant than meets the ear ;” and that from numerous Irish topographical terms, into the composition of which the words *cu*, *cou*, &c. (dog or hound) enter—and from their connection with various traditions, something bordering on the worship of the Egyptian Anubis was once prevalent in Ireland. Here is fine game started for our Archæologists. The learned Jacob Bryant gives much information on the subject, and tells us, on the authority of Ælian and Plutarch, that the people of Æthiopia had a dog for their king—that he was “royally treated,” and worshipped with a degree of religious reverence. There have been many kings, and priests too, less worthy than dogs of royal honours and religious veneration.

O’Donovan informs us that “The old Irish used the word *Cu*, a dog, or hound, to denote a hero or fierce warrior, and in this sense it frequently entered into the composition of names of men, as *Cu-Mara*, i. e. dog of the sea ; *Cu Uladh*, dog of Ulster ; *Cu Mumhan*, dog of Munster. In the same sense the Latins used *Catullus*, *Cato*, and the Greeks *Cyrus*.”

## VIII.

Anon, slow moving o'er the green  
 With limping pace, poor Brann was seen  
 In dismal plight, fatigued and spent  
 With froth and mud and mire besprent.  
 Small joy had she her friends to meet;  
 When, falling at her master's feet,  
 She sent forth many a piteous moan,  
 To make her sad disasters known.  
 "Alas! poor Brann, thy wretched case  
 Portends, to all the Fenian race,  
 Some danger near"—said Finn aloud;  
 When answered thus the Fenians proud—  
 "No danger far or near  
 From foes that ever crossed the wave,  
 Though great their force—their spirit brave,  
 Do we bold Fenians fear;  
 But now in sorrow deep we mourn  
 To think our friends will ne'er return.  
 Nor e'er again the joyful sounds  
 Hear of our sweet swift-footed hounds."

## IX.

While thus they grieved—advancing nigh,  
 A beauteous female form we spy.  
 Her step, her mien, her noble face,  
 Were clothed with dignity and grace,  
 And told her born of princely race,  
 Her hair, in ringlets half-unrolled,  
 Deep-flowing shone like twisted gold,  
 So long that, as she nearer drew,  
 From the grass it swept the pearly dew.\*

\* The hair of the Fenian heroines was deemed an essential requisite of their beauty. Hence we often find their long curling and twisted locks mentioned in the minstrels' descriptions. In this their taste corresponded with that of the Greeks, Romans, Arabians, Jews—and indeed of all who have any perception of the beautiful. Sharon Turner says that among the Saxons long hair was highly "valuable and reputable." In Aldhelm's poem of Holofernes, Judith is perpetually mentioned with epithets allusive to her hair—as

The maid of the Creator,  
 With twisted locks.



Her brow majestic vaulted high,  
 Looked down upon her azure eye  
     That seemed to swim in light:  
 Her cheeks were of the crimson glow  
 That the quicken's berries round them throw,  
     All dazzling to the sight,  
 And from her mouth sweet music broke,  
 When thus to noble Finn she spoke:

## X.

"To thee—to thy heroic bands,  
 And all who own thy high commands,  
     A fond request I bring,  
 O Finn, to come to the royal dome,  
 Where now my princess makes her home,  
     The daughter of a king—  
 The king of Greece. She for a while  
 Rests here unknown in Erin's isle.  
 Ten hundred ships, a gallant fleet,  
     Her sire his daughter gave;  
 And in them many a maiden sweet  
     Has ploughed the eastern wave.  
 In yonder isle, the shore beside,  
 They float upon the glassy tide,  
 Deep-laden with a precious store  
 Of satins, silks, and shining ore,  
 With other wealth more rich and rare  
 Than thou canst guess, or I declare.

The curious reader may see, in a small volume of Romances, by J. D. Israeli, in a note too long for quotation here, a variety of passages from different authors, descriptive of this "most seducing ornament of beauty," viz., the hyacinthine, clustering, crisped, curled, silken locks and glossy ringlets—*l'aurée, crespe e lunghi e d'oro*. As the Apostle Paul says, "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her"—our minstrel's Grecian damsel's golden hair, which was so long that, "from the grass it swept the pearly dew," would have appeared to all whose taste harmonized with the Apostle's peculiarly *glorious*.

Guiniver, the wife of King Arthur, was named the "golden-haired queen." When Boadicea addressed her army about to engage in fierce conflict with the Romans, she is described as having "the tresses of her yellow hair hanging to the skirts of her dress."

Yes, many a cask of rosy wine,  
And many a spit with haunch of deer,  
And many a horn that gems entwine  
Full to the brim, thy heart to cheer,  
On thee, O Finn, await.  
Many the ships that line the strand;  
Many the gay pavilions stand,  
With brilliant lights and lustres fair,  
For thee, O Finn, they now prepare  
All drest in regal state."

## XI.

This said—the maiden turned away—  
We followed soon in close array,  
And to the island-shores we sped  
Where the beauteous Grecian maiden led :  
There met we, as we hoped to meet,  
A warm and gracious welcome sweet  
From each kind-hearted Grecian maid.  
For us the sumptuous feast was laid,  
Delicious viands—goblets crowned  
With sparkling wine, went round and round,  
And all was such as well became  
Our great illustrious chief of fame.

## XII.

When now our hunger was repressed  
With fare the choicest and the best,  
Uprising, with a sudden start,  
Cried Finn—"to take a moment's rest,  
I from the board depart."  
While yet he spoke, in troubled mood, }  
A female large before him stood, }  
Of form and features coarse and rude, }  
Her hair like beaded sea-wreck spread  
Around her large mis-shapen head,  
And fell, like tangled briars, down,  
Compressed beneath a golden crown.

Her sides—the one was snowy white,  
The other black as the collied night.  
A robe of rich resplendent sheen  
Across her shoulders flung,  
Trying to hide her awkward mien,  
Down to her buskins hung—  
Her features all were foul and grim,  
Giant her frame, both body and limb.

## XIII.

With hands cross-folded o'er her breast,  
Our king she proudly thus addressed:  
" King of the Fenian warriors dear,  
To me thou art most welcome here.  
My ships now rocking on the brine,  
My gold—my treasures—all are thine ;  
Thine my fair maidens, and for life,  
Am I thy dearest, loving, wife.  
Illustrious warrior ! here in me,  
Come from a distant land ;  
You Greece's royal daughter see ;  
Who gives you now her hand ;  
One who since first her life began  
Before ne'er proffered love to man.  
To you, great chief, renowned in war,  
She brings great treasures from afar.  
Thine are her silver, gold, and gems,  
Her truncheons, swords, and diadems,  
With power to stretch thy sceptre forth  
O'er all the world from south to north."

## XIV.

She ceased—and gravely thus replied  
Our loved and noble chief :  
" Lady ! thou ne'er canst be my bride—  
This is my answer brief.  
Despite thy flowing robe, I know  
This morn thou wast a hornless doe ;

And thee we chased o'er moor and knoll  
Through the brown scars of Glennasmol.  
And now I ask thee to declare,  
Breathe yet our hounds this vital air?"

## XV.

"No—by thy hand great Finn I vow,  
They lie of life bereft;  
But one of all is living now,  
Thy Brann alone is left.  
And many a stalwart warrior bold,  
Who bravely fought, lies stark and cold,  
Down stricken by my trenchant blade,  
When hosts against me stood arrayed:  
Nor shall I now depart from thee,  
Till o'er thy Fenian train  
I claim a glorious victory,  
And heap with dead the plain.  
Till this right hand, though proud the boasts,  
And great the strength of the Fenian hosts,  
Has cleft their serried phalanx\* down,  
And shorn them of their fair renown."

## XVI.

She then a magic rite began,  
With music's potent spell;  
Through the Fenians' breasts chill horror ran,  
And fainting down they fell.†

\* The reader will remember that it is a Grecian heroine who speaks—and though *serried phalanx* is not in the original, it is in the military language of Greece, and therefore, not inappropriate to the character.

† "The extent to which the belief in magic was carried, even by the most enlightened, during the middle ages, is really wonderful, and we cannot be surprised at its being frequently employed in the machinery of Romance, when an historian like Froissart gravely tells us of castles that were lost and won by means of optical deceptions. In the case he cites they were produced by an enchanter, 'a conning man in nigromancy,' who was with the army of the Duke of Anjou and the Earl of Savoy, then lying before the city of Naples. This magician proposed, by his art, to put into the power of these two princes the castle which they were besieging, and which he boasted having already delivered to Sir Charles de la Paye, who was then in possession of it. Shocked, however, at his treachery towards his former



Strong was the charm she o'er them cast,  
 Till she bound them in strong fetters fast ;  
 Then forth her flaming sword she drew,  
     To us a fearful sight !  
 Such lightning flashes round it flew,  
     And with resistless might  
 Descending, shortened by the head,  
 A hundred men on their gory bed.  
 Oh ! direful tale—oh ! cruel deed !  
 That thus our gallant men should bleed,  
     And ne'er have lifted spear,  
 Not crossed a sword—not winged a dart,  
 But slaughtered lie by magic art,  
     Like a herd of prisoned deer !

employer, they assured him that he should 'never do more enchantments to deceyve hym, nor yet any other,' and repaid his offers of service by causing him to be beheaded on the spot."—*Note to Geraint, the son of Erbin, in the Mabinogion, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest.*

One of the most common effects of ancient magic was to deprive those who were brought under its influence, of all spirit and strength. Thus in the metrical romance of the marriage of Sir Gawaine, when King Arthur came to Tearne Wadlinge, and thus spoke out his challenge:—

Come forth, come forth, thou proud barone,  
 Or yielde thyself my thralle ;

he felt himself quite unmanned, for

" On magicke grounde that castle stooode  
     And fenced with many a spelle ;  
 Noe valiant knighte could tread thereon,  
     But straite his courage felle,  
 Forth then rush'd that carlish knight,  
     King Arthur felte the charme ;  
 His sturdy sinewes lost their strengthe,  
     Downe sunke his feeble arme."

*Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.*

# THE LAY

OF

## THE CHASE OF GLENNASMOL.

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### DUAN SECOND.

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ARGUMENT.—Ossian, in continuation of his tale, informs Patrick that all the Fenians, except Conan, Oscar, and himself, were overcome by magic spells—that Finn had recourse to supplication—and let the princess know that, being already espoused to Gaul's sister, he would be the victim of that warrior's resentment should he espouse another. The princess is peremptory—declares she will strike off the head of Gaul, and eke the heads of all the Fenians, unless they hail her queen. The fleet now advances towards the shore, and being spied by Gaul, he anticipates some great calamity. Caoilte goes to the beach to make inquiry, and is horror-struck on beholding the hideous form of the princess, but nevertheless asks her name and her object in coming to their shores. She answers that unless she is at once received as queen and wife to Finn, she will put Gaul and all the Fenians to the sword. Gaul, on hearing this, immediately arrays a formidable force, and after sustaining the loss of a thousand men, arms himself to meet the princess. They fought three days, and left the strife undecided. Meantime Finn, Dermuid, and Ossian, were detained in the island, under the custody of fifty maidens. One of these, who kept watch in turn to prevent escape, was of a generous disposition, and lent a willing ear to the flattering speeches of Dermuid, a perfect adept in the art of winning woman's love, who promised to espouse her if she would unloose their chains. This agreement being ratified, Conan, envious of their happiness, approaches the maiden stealthily, and, with one sweep of his sword, cuts off her head. Dermuid would have instantly avenged this ruthless deed, had not Oscar swiftly interposed. They then rush out to the field where lay their slaughtered companions. While Gaul was preparing for the fight, Oscar prevailed on him to let him try one pass at arms with the formidable heroine. Oscar soon ended the contest by sending a dart, with resistless force, through her body—an act which gratified all the Fenians, except Gaul, who regretted that he had allowed another to have the honour of achieving a victory which he might have gained for himself. In this, as in many others of the Fenian lays, it is a primary object with the Bard to magnify the exploits of Oscar.

## I.

'Tis glorious, in a well-fought field,  
Where man meets man in mortal strife,  
Breath for our country's good to yield,  
For glory sweet to barter life—  
But not without the clash of arms,  
To fall by incantation's charms.

## II.

Our Fenian warriors, young and gay, }  
Who to the isle had bent their way, }  
On the cold ground beside us lay, }  
By magic spells of life bereft—  
But I, to tell the tale, was left,  
With Finn, magnanimous and kind,  
Bald Conan, of a cheerless mind,  
Young Oscar, my heroic son,  
And, woman's darling, Dermuid Dun.

## III.

With grief, in this eventful hour,  
Finn bent before superior power,  
By stern necessity compressed,  
He thus the sorceress addressed :  
“ Great princess ! hear thy suppliant's prayer,  
And let thy anger cease ;  
O spare my people, daughter, spare !  
And let us dwell in peace.  
Soon, lady, would I call thee mine,  
And in firm bonds of wedlock join,  
Did not blind Gaul the act oppose,  
And rank me with his direst foes.  
Should I resign my present wife  
For thee, blind Gaul would seek my life :  
For her he loves with heart-love strong,  
As high his kindred dear among.”

“Then hear me”—thus the sorceress said—  
“From Gaul the head I’ll strike;  
And soon from this my vengeful blade  
May the Fenians fear the like—  
Yes—all shall feel my weapon keen,  
Unless they choose and hail me queen.”

## IV.

Now bent the ships their snow-white sails,  
To catch the rising land-ward gales;  
And soon they reached the shelving strand,  
Where Gaul sustained his high command.  
When he the haughty fleet espied  
Advance in proud array,  
“Some dreadful tale of wo,” he cried,  
“I fear those ships convey;  
Ill tidings of our absent king,  
And of our Fenian chiefs, they bring.  
But who will to their landing go  
And bring back tidings—weal or wo?”  
“I,” Caoilte cried, “will speed alone,  
And soon shall make their purpose known.”

## V.

Then forth the generous Caoilte sped  
With light and nimble-footed tread,  
And reached, in time, the pebbly strand,  
To see the bold invaders land.  
But when he saw their cruel queen—  
Her giant bones, her hideous mien,  
Her fierce and stern forbidding face,  
Devoid of every human grace—  
He shuddered on her form to look,  
And his manly heart in his body shook:  
Yet found he power to ask her name,  
And whence, and why, she thither came.  
She quick returned this bold reply:—  
“Daughter of Greece’s king am I.



With full ten hundred warriors brave,  
I come to prove your might ;  
From me let Gaul this answer have,  
Blind Gaul renowned in fight.  
To him and to his Fenians say,  
That Erin's champions all I'll slay,  
Unless they me select for life  
Their queen—and Finn's, your chieftain's wife."  
This message stern to carry back  
Swift-footed Caoilte was not slack.

## VI.

Then Gaul, incensed—of warriors bold  
Selects a hundred, ten times told—  
The bravest of the brave.  
They fought—they fell—ten hundred more,  
Ere set of sun, lay stretched in gore,  
Beneath the slaughtering glaive.

## VII.

Next morn, with early morning light,  
Came forth great Gaul prepared for fight :  
A helm of massive strength he wore :  
And on his arm a shield,  
Round, bossy, strong, and tough, he bore,  
Bright blazing o'er the field ;  
And, in his better hand a blade  
Of tempered steel, with gold inlaid,  
And, as it glanced in azure flame,  
To mortal strife he dared the dame.

## VIII.

They met—three days they bravely fought,  
Three nights, no food, no rest they sought ;  
With thrust for thrust, and blow for blow,  
Each so maintained the game,  
That neither o'er a vanquished foe  
The victory might claim.

## IX.

We who were in the isle detained,  
Were still in magic fetters chained,  
With Finn and Dermuid Dun :  
A band of fifty maidens fair  
Was o'er us placed, to watch with care ;  
But all, save only one,  
Retired awhile their eyes to close,  
And find in sleep a soft repose.

## X.

This maiden was of generous race,  
Of lovely mien—of winning grace ;  
With eyes that love's own fires illumine,  
Just ripening into woman's bloom.  
Her, Dermuid, whose bewitching wile,  
Whose flattering tongue and winning art,  
Could well a gentle maid beguile,  
And find smooth access to her heart,  
Thus fond addressed—"Thou maid divine,  
Oh ! might I call such beauty mine !  
Oh ! dearer to my heart than life,  
The right to truly call thee wife.  
Such graceful ringlets as bedeck,  
Soft flowing down, thy polished neck !  
Such teeth—than pearls more clear and white !  
Such cheeks in rosy lustre bright !  
Such eyes as in enchantment roll ;  
And spread their witchery o'er my soul !  
Thy charms all women's charms surpass,  
Of every form—of every class—  
No, ne'er in woman kind, I vow,  
Such matchless charms I saw till now !  
Oh ! that these fettered limbs were free,  
That hence I might escape with thee."  
"Could I but think thy words sincere,"  
In whisper soft and low,  
The maid replied, "I would not fear  
To free thee from this wo :

Soon would I burst the galling chain  
From thee and all thy Fenian train.”  
“Then hear me, sweetest maiden fair—  
Oh! come and set us free,  
No guileful words are mine, I swear,  
My spouse thou aye shalt be,  
As long as lives my Fenian name,  
Or throbs the life-blood in my frame.”

## XI.

Quick she dissolved the magic spell,  
And from our limbs the fetters fell ;  
Our wonted life and strength returned ;  
With love's warm raptures Dermuid burned ;  
He clasped the maiden to his breast,  
And on her balmy lips impressed  
Such grateful kisses, warm and sweet,  
As give fond lovers when they meet.

## XII.

But Conan bald, that wretch accursed,  
Of cowards vile the vilest, worst,  
By stealth approached the peerless maid,  
And, with his keen remorseless blade,  
Smote off her lovely head.\*  
Oh! shameful, ruthless, horrid deed!  
For this should villain Conan bleed,  
And rot with dastards dead.  
And soon would Dermuid's vengeful steel  
Have made the bald-pate coward reel,  
And closed all farther strife :  
But Oscar, who his danger spied,  
Forth springing, turned the sword aside,  
And saved his worthless life.

\* This act of Conan, so ungrateful and so atrocious, admits of no palliation—nor is it easy to imagine how the bard could admit into his song so gratuitous a deed of cruelty—unless he felt himself obliged to introduce Conan, according to the usual practice of the Fenian bards, as committing some gross outrage, or flagitious act of madness.

## XIII.

Now rushing forth, without delay,  
To the battle field we bent our way,  
Where the giant dame had fought :  
Upon the mossy blood-drenched sod,  
O'er mangled heaps of slain, we trod,  
And mourned the woes she wrought :  
On their stark corpses while we gazed,  
A long and loud lament we raised.

## XIV.

There Gaul we found, the good, the true,  
Prepared the combat to renew.  
But Oscar longed, in single fight,  
To prove the woman-victor's might ;  
And begged of Gaul to grant him grace  
To look the sorceress in the face.  
"There lives not one," thus Gaul replied,  
"In blooming Erin's circuit wide ;  
Not one from sea to sea,  
To whom I will resign my claim  
To combat with the giant dame,  
Or share the task with me,  
Till ample vengeance shall be paid  
For all the slaughter she has made."

## XV.

But Fergus came his will to bend,  
Fergus, the poet's generous friend,  
Who loved to scatter gold among  
The learned and sweet-voiced sons of song :  
With tongue persuasive he implored  
The haughty Gaul, that Oscar's sword  
Might be allowed one pass to try  
With the dame that dared our hosts defy.



## XVI.

Gaul's will obtained—forth Oscar went,  
And near her as he drew,  
With lion force his spear he sent—  
It pierced her body through—  
Deep wounding many a vital part,  
Draining the life-blood from her heart.  
Down, like a beacon tower beneath  
The thunder's bolt, on the trodden heath,  
With such a crashing sound she fell—  
With such a loud and hideous yell,  
As roused the mountain deer ;  
As shook the woods, the rocks, the floods,  
And filled the world with fear.  
But the Fenians raised a joyous cry  
For Oscar and his victory.

## XVII.

In this gigantic woman's fall,  
I fear the pleasure was but small  
Of Morni's gallant son.  
He grieved to have resigned the chance—  
That not by his, but Oscar's, lance,  
The victory was won :  
A deed that gave to Oscar's name  
A glorious and immortal fame.



# THE LAY

OF

## THE BATTLE OF GAVRA.

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As the battle of Gavra was one of the most sanguinary ever fought in Ireland, and as it furnished a copious theme to the bards and historians of succeeding times, it may not be uninteresting to the reader to have some account of that memorable and disastrous event—an event long remembered and bitterly deplored by the bards and senachies of Ireland.

Moghcorb, son of Cormac Cais, who reigned King of Leath Mogha, or southern division of Ireland, was a prince extolled for bravery and for his public and private virtues. His mother, according to O'Halloran, was a Danish princess. At her instigation he prepared a fleet and army, invaded Denmark, and having gained a signal victory, returned with wealth and glory to his own country. The fame of his exploits excited the jealousy of Cairbre Liffechair, king of Leath Con, the northern division of the island; and he took up arms to reduce Munster under his dominion, though having no legitimate title to its possession. It is affirmed in the Annals of Tigernach, that he fought seven battles against the Lagenians in vindication of his claims. There were other causes, however, to exasperate the monarch, and lead him to aim at the complete extinction of his rival potentate.

It is highly probable that long prior to any formidable invasion by the Danes, that adventurous and piratical people had not only occasionally visited Ireland, for the sake of commerce or plunder, but had formed settlements in some of the principal maritime cities. To prevent the frequent occurrence of their piratical expeditions, the princes of the country raised the militia of their respective provinces for the express object of watching and guarding the coasts. This militia was known by the name of the *Fiona Erionn*, and being well armed and disciplined under their respective leaders, all of them men of tried valour, they were ever ready to take the field, at the call of danger. Of these military men there were two principal septs, between whom there prevailed strong rivalry and contention. The one sept, or clan, named Clanna Boisdne, was commanded by Finn, the son of Cumhal, commonly known by the name of *Fin MacCool*, a chief of invincible strength and valour—the other, Clanna Morni, by Gaul, the son of Morni, one of the most celebrated warriors of his age and country. These were of the province of Connaught, in the pay of the prince of that country. The Clanna Boisdne were in allegiance to Cairbre Liffechair, king of Leinster, the *Ard Righ*, high king or monarch of Ireland.

Of Finn, the leader of the Clanna Boisdne, much has been said and written

that is altogether fabulous and incredible. He became to the Irish what King Arthur was to the ancient Britons, the subject of innumerable legends—of enchantments, gigantic feats of strength and valour, having little or no foundation in fact. By some he has been described as a giant—by some, in the rank of historians, as a Dane—by others as a Caledonian—by Macpherson as the monarch of woody Morven, a kingdom in *Terra incognita*—whereas those who are best acquainted with the genuine and authentic annals of Irish history, prove incontestibly that he was a true-born Irishman; that Almhuin, now the Hill of Allen, in the county of Kildare, was his principal place of residence—that he was the son of a noble chief named Cumhal (pronounced Cool) who was the son of Treanmor, the son of Farlagh, the son of Conn, the son of Gorrie, the son of Boisgnea, and that he was the father of the celebrated bard Ossian, who was the father of Osgar, who fell in the battle of Gavra, and with whom, it is presumed, this genealogical line terminated.

The original of the following verses, is supposed to have been written by Ossian himself in his old age, and addressed to St. Patrick :—

From Boisgne first host-leading Gorrie sprung ;  
 From Gorrie, Conn in lays of victory sung :  
 The generous Farlagh boasts a sire in Conn,  
 And in Treanmor a brave and gallant son.  
 Next from Treanmor the festive Cumhal came ;  
 From Cumhal Finn of great prophetic fame.  
 The last of all th' illustrious line behold  
 In Ossian, son of Finn, now poor and old.  
 Oh ! did the Fenians breathe this vital air,  
 Thou son of Calfruin, ne'er would I repair  
 Thus to thy cell, nor pass the weary time  
 In listening to the dull eternal chime  
 Of thy church notes.—When in Maynooth's sweet bowers,  
 My Caoilte passed with me the happy hours,  
 No want we knew—but now behold me, Sage,  
 With generous pity, worn by care and age,  
 The sole survivor of a numerous line,  
 Thus left in want and solitude to pine.

General Vallancey seems to think that our Irish Finn is a character altogether imaginary, drawn from the Persian Asfendyar, surnamed *Ruitan*, or *body of brass*, on account of his great strength—often alluded to as one of the greatest heroes of Persia. He says that “the Irish Fiand or Fiann is a word of oriental origin, and that it signifies troops for the defence of a country—that the Italian *Fante* and the French *Fantassin* are derived from our Fiana, as is also the English *infantry*. The Persian Asfendyar is grandson of Lohorash, Fionn is the grandson of Treinemor, a mighty monarch. Asfendyar is killed by *Rostam*, in the cause of *buhuram*, an oppressive tribute. *Fionn MacCuil* opposes the *Boroimh*, or royal tribute laid on by the king of Leinster.”\*

\* Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland, pp. 355—358. The mode in which the learned Antiquary pursues his argument, is marvellously entertaining. Verily he seems to have taken a lesson on “comparisons” from that ingenious and renowned dialectician, Captain Fluellen, on whose name the pages of Shakespeare have conferred immortality.



Let us now hear Mac Curtin, an author held in no small estimation by Irish historians :—

“ In this Cormac’s time, flourished that famous champion Fionn, the son of Cumhall, a wise and warlike man. He was general of the Irish militia, consisting of seven battalions, that is 21,000 men ; (the Lagenian, or Irish militia, called *Fiana Erionn*,) and when happened wars at home, or occasion to have an army abroad, they were raised to nine battalions. This Fionn was neither Giant, nor Dane, nor other foreigner, as no more were any of his commanders, captains, or soldiers ; he was but of the ordinary stature of other men, though some foreign authors say he was a Giant of 15 cubits high. He was an *Irish-Man* both by birth and descent, lineally sprung from *Nuadha-neacht*, king of Lenster, of the posterity of Herimon ; tho’ Hector Boetius, in his History of Scotland, and Hanmer, in his History of Ireland, tell several false relations of him and his army ; this proceeds from their mistakes in the true histories of Ireland ; for the Irish had several romances as *Bruighean and Chaorthuinn*, *Cathfionntragh*a, &c., as well for the children and youth for school books, as for to entertain leasurable hours ; and every man of common sense among the Irish could distinguish such from their true Chronicles, and real Histories. Its allowed that Fionn and his army were the best warriors in Ireland in their time, and were kept in constant pay by the monarchs, princes, and other nobility of the kingdom, for to guard their coasts from abroad and keep all quiet at home ; with power to suppress a rebellion, or withstand an invasion or succour *Dal-Riada* in *Albain*, now called Scotland.”

“ No man was received into this army or militia, but such as should perform ten conditions, that none could possibly do, but such as had a store of strength, courage, valour, and agility, almost incredible to be in any human body,”\*—Mac Curtin’s Brief Discourse in Vindication of the Antiquities of Ireland, collected out of many authentic Irish Histories and Chronicles, and out of Foreign Learned Authors, pp. 113, 114, Dublin, 1717.

If men in possession of power are too much inclined to make it subservient to their cupidity and ambition, we need not be surprised to hear that the Fenians abused their privileges, and became the oppressors of the country of which they were the appointed guardians. Hanmer gives a striking description of the modes in which the Danes, whom he evidently confounds and identifies with the *Fiana Erionn*, tyrannized over the people, and at length rebelled against their sovereignty.†

“ In the time of *Karbre Lifeacher*, monarch of Ireland, the Danish Captains with their bands and garrisons, waxed insolent and outrageous, they weighed not what prince or people said, they grew strong and rich, not caring what they did : they brought up fond customs of their owne devising, oppressing the people, and disdaining the gentle admonitions of the kings and nobilitie of the land. Among themselves they decreed, that no maid should marry without their license, that none should hunt the hare, otter, foxe, wolfe, matterne, or deare, but should pay them what they pleased to rate it at, and that none should use any other pastime without their pri-

\* The curious reader may see those conditions mentioned in Keating.

† Hanmer depends much on the “Book of Howth”—an authority not to be totally rejected, though justly characterised by Mr. J. O’Donovan as “a repertory of Anglo-Irish traditions and legends.” He gives us a list of the names of the principal coast-guard officers and their stations—commencing with that of “Oaker Mac Oshen Mac Fin, who with his souldiers kept the haven of Dublin.”

vitie. The kings and nobilitie of the land called a Parliament, endeavouring to reforme these abuses, charging them to surcease from their outrages, or to leave the land. The Danes answered that they came in with the sword, held by the sword, and with the sword would be driven away."

The conflict, however, was not between the Danes and the Irish, but between the monarch and his rebellious subjects. The immediate cause of the rebellion is not very clearly ascertained; but it was probably on account of severe measures adopted by Cairbre to correct the disorderly conduct of the Fenians, and particularly his exaction of the Boromean tribute.\* The Clanna Boisgne, under the command of Oscar, son of Ossian, and grandson of Finn, having revolted from their allegiance, entered into the service of Mogh Corb, king of Munster, the friend and near relative of their leader, for he had espoused the daughter of Finn, the sister of Ossian. Cairbre, incensed at their conduct, threatened war against their protector, unless he expelled them from his dominions. This Mogh Corb refused. Cairbre determined to carry his threats into execution. War was proclaimed, and both parties prepared to end their dispute by a decisive battle.

Cairbre collected a powerful army, consisting of the men of Meath, the troops of Connaught, commanded by their king, Aoidh Caomh, (or Hugh, son of Garaídh Glundubh,) the Fenians of the Clanna Morni, "a military tribe of the Firbolgs of Connaught," and nine Catha or battalions from Ulster.

To oppose Cairbre was the army of Munster, commanded by Mogh Corb ("chief of the chariot"), and his son Fear Corb ("the man of the chariot"), the Clanna Deaga, the valiant Dalcassians, the Fenians of the Clanna Boisgne, with the men of Leinster, and a considerable number of allies from Britain, Denmark, and Norway.

"Tenne thousand stalworth souldiers (Danes), under the command of the King of Denmark's son, with their Irish allies, made up 28,700. The kings of Ireland with their forces, were three score and five thousand." Thus the two armies amounted to the number of 93,700, which is scarcely credible. This account, however, amply justifies the declaration of our Fenian bard, that Cairbre had a great superiority of numbers.

It was agreed that the battle should be fought in the valley of Gabhra (Gavra), about half a mile distant from the celebrated hill of Tara.† On the appointed day, the army of Mogh Corb marched towards the field, eager for conflict. "The kings, in like sort, with their forces, hearing that their enemies approached, set themselves in battaile array, and came to a place where they all kissed the ground,‡ readie to dye one with another, and gave (after their manner) such a cry, as if heaven and earth met together, and therewith somewhat amazed their enemies, so that the place to this day is called Balle-Nangartha, in English Garretstowne."

\* The Boroinhe was "a fine or tribute paid by the nobility of Leinster to Tuathal, surnamed *the fruitful*. It consisted of 600 cows, 600 hogs, 600 sheep, 600 ounces of silver, 600 mantles, and 600 tons of iron, yearly, which was paid during the reigns of 40 kings successively."—Mac Curtin, 93.

† Hammer says the "battaille was appointed to be fought at Amaghery Orgallin, now called Margallin, in Westmeath, though the field be called Ardkagh, which is, by interpretation, a set field." To our Irish bards and senachies the battle is known only by the name of Gavra.

‡ This may remind the reader of a similar fact in the field of Bannockburn. See "Bruce's Invasion," by the Author, pp. 63—109.

The two armies fought with indomitable valour and with various success, during the length of a summer day. In the heat of the engagement, Cairbre and Oscar met. The former, with a poisoned spear, contrary to the laws of legitimate warfare, inflicted on his antagonist a mortal wound; and after receiving a deadly thrust from the spear of Oscar, was slain by Simon, the son of Kirb of the race of the Fotharts (*Ogygia*, p. 246). The principal leaders on both sides, with 30,000 men, were slain. Of 20,000 Fenians who entered the field, 18,000 fell, and thus was the Fenian power annihilated. This battle was fought A.D. 296?

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## DUAN FIRST.

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ARGUMENT.—This lay commences, as usual, with a dialogue. Patrick requests Ossian to inform him who were esteemed the bravest of the Fenians, and being answered, he inquires farther who gained the victory in the battle of Gavra. Ossian replies that neither of the opposing parties could boast of a great triumph. He then proceeds to enumerate the forces and principal leaders of both armies, viz., the Fenians from Binn-Eadair (Howth); from Alba (Scotland); and from Lochlin, led by Oscar and his subordinate officers. To oppose them came Cairbre, the monarch—Hugh, the son of Garaidh—and the King of Connaught. Cairbre asks MacGeraidh if he would meet Oscar in single combat. MacGeraidh declines, because Oscar had the reputation of being invincible. He is rebuked by Cairbre for cowardice, and for not embracing the present opportunity of being avenged on the Clanna Boisgne for the murder of his father—Cairbre calls a council of war—Barron makes a gallant speech, in which he enumerates the grievances they had suffered from their enemies, and it is resolved to make the most determined onslaught upon them, and conquer or die.

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### I.

PATRICK.—O Ossian, hospitable, bland,  
Of generous heart and liberal hand,

A kind response I crave :  
Who of the gallant Fenian host,  
Were ever thought, and vaunted most  
As bravest of the brave ?

OSSIAN.—Great Finn, of noble Trenmore sprung ;  
My Oscar, fearless, strong, and young ;  
And Ossian, I, now stricken old,  
Were deemed the boldest of the bold.

PATRICK.—And who, in glorious deeds of fame,  
Might next—the fourth distinction—claim ?

OSSIAN.—Four were the bravest of our clan,  
In every fight who led the van ;  
Swift-footed Fillan, Luay's son,  
Cairoll the mild, and Dermuid Dun.  
These never, in the battle field,  
To victor's arm were known to yield ;  
But strangers still to fear,  
Quick to advance—and never slow—  
They joyed to grapple with the foe,  
And greet with sword and spear.

PATRICK.—And who beside, as warriors good,  
Among the Fenians, chieftains stood,  
In past or present times to aid  
Your cause, in glittering arms arrayed ?

OSSIAN.—Great Art, and Gaul, and Garay strong,  
Ere Gavra's rueful fight,  
Full well avenged each Fenian wrong,  
And well sustained their right.  
Bædan, and Barron too, were found  
Among our Fenian chiefs renowned ;  
With Rocha's chieftain, Ædan fair,  
Still prompt his falchion keen to bare.  
E'en Conan, of the evil tongue,  
Where clash of swords the loudest rung,  
With trenchant steel and winged dart,  
Performed a stalwart champion's part.  
And Simon too, though named the last,  
Was ne'er in deeds of war surpast.  
Brave Simon, son of Kirb, the pride  
Of the noble Fothart race ;  
Who fought with Oscar side by side,  
Nor feared a host to face,  
But ever foremost in the field,  
Rejoiced his battle-axe to wield,  
As Erin's monarch knew too well,  
When by its crushing blows he fell.



## II.

PATRICK.—Sweet son of Song, my thanks receive  
For what you now unfold;  
And let it not thy spirit grieve  
To dwell on times of old.  
Say—who from Gavra's field of gore,  
The fair renown of victory bore?

OSSIAN.—Of either host, alas! but few  
Were left to tell, I ween:  
Yet I remain—yet seem to view  
The dire horrific scene;  
Sad visions pass before my eyes;  
My Oscar dead before me lies!  
O Oscar dear! my son! my son!  
Would that with thine my course were run!  
Would that for thee, my boast, my pride,  
On Gavra's field thy sire had died!  
Rampant as lions, in the morn,  
They marched in proud array;  
At eve, of all their glory shorn,  
Pale, stark, and cold, they lay.  
Small was the triumph to behold  
Our warriors lie so stark, so cold,  
So wounded, gashed, and maimed, and rent,  
And all with blackening gore besprent.

## III.

When by Ben-Eadair's rocky height  
Our men we numbered for the fight,  
Three hundred Fenians held command,  
Each o'er his own heroic band.  
Of those thrice ten could kindred claim  
With Finn, of far illustrious fame,  
Who ever in the battle field,  
First poised the spear or struck the shield.

The British king, to aid our cause,  
 His noble warriors lent;  
 And Alba, bound by friendship's laws,  
 Her clans to join us sent;  
 And Lochlin, from the frozen North,  
 Sent many a hardy champion forth,  
 Who with our Fenians close allied,  
 In Gavra's conflict fought and died.

## IV.

My Oscar's Fenians to oppose,  
 Advanced a host of mail-clad foes,  
 By Erin's monarch led,  
 Great Cairbre, of the Liffey named,  
 For many a high achievement famed,  
 And of his foes the dread.  
 There Osgar, son of Garay,\* came  
 To earn th' immortal meed of fame,  
 With twice five hundred men;

\* OSCAR appears to have been a favourite name, as we find three heroes in this battle designated by that appellation. The MacGaray here addressed by Cairbre, was not Hugh, as stated in the translation from the Irish poem in the Four Masters, but Osgar the son of Garay, or Geraidh, as the word is spelled in the original. Hugh had joined the Clanna Boisgne against Garay his father, who was one of the Clanna Morni, and having slain him, cast himself in remorse into the sea and perished. Garay was an object of the Fenians' determined hostility, which he had provoked by an atrocious act of cruelty. One day, during the absence of the Fenians from the palace of Almhuin, the Princess Ailbe, bent on some contrivance to entertain the ladies of the court, said to them—"Should a body of invaders happen to land, they could easily carry away all the wives of the Fenians, since none remains to protect us but those who are enfeebled by age. Garay, indeed, would be the first to lift a hand in our defence, but since he is fast asleep, let us make his hair fast to the wall, and then raise the war cry." This was accordingly done—and the war-cry of invasion raised; which aroused Garay so suddenly that the effort stripped off the hair and skin of his head. In the fury of revenge he shut up the Fenian ladies in the palace, and having fired it in seven places, all of them were consumed. In revenge of this barbarous deed, the Fenians hunted Garay from mountain to valley, till at last he fell by the hand of his own son. The murder is attributed by Cairbre to the descendants of Trenmor, and is mentioned by him to stimulate Osgar MacGaray to revenge.

The substance of this note was kindly communicated by Mr. Nicholas Kearney.

The mode in which Garay lost his hair may remind the reader of a similar misfortune which had nearly befallen a bacchanalian worthy (mentioned by Sir Jonah Barrington), who laid down his head to sleep against a newly plastered wall, which, hardening while he slept, held him fast by the hair, till he was freed by his friends, without whose aid he would have found it possible to effect his liberation only by the loss of his scalp.

And Connaught's king brought all his might,  
 Arrayed to meet us in the fight,  
 From many a hill and glen.  
 From Ulster five battalions bold  
 Came with the troops of Meath enrolled—  
 A host of strong embattled powers,  
 In numbers far surpassing ours.\*

## V.

While now the chiefs their ranks arrayed,  
 King Cairbre to MacGaray said,  
 "Dar'st thou, brave chief, in Erin's right,  
 Young Oscar meet in single fight?"

MacGaray thus replied :

"No warrior lives who can withstand  
 Young Oscar's strong resistless hand"—  
 And hence the well-known adage rose,  
 "Oscar no mortal dares oppose."

Then wrathful Cairbre cried ;

"Hast thou from Alba come afar,  
 To join the ranks of Erin's war,  
 Yet feel it no disgrace—

No shame—to say, from dastard fear,  
 Thou dar'st not cross a sword or spear

With a youth of Trenmor's race ?

Thy wrongs thou shouldst remember well ;

By Trenmor's sons thy father fell ;

And now is come the wished-for day,

The Clanna-Boisgne to repay—

\* The warriors of Ireland are thus described in Sir John Harington's translation of Orlando Furioso, Book x., Sts. 74, 75 :—

"Then come the Irishmen of valiant harts,  
 And active limbs, in personages tall,  
 They naked use to go in many parts,  
 But with a mantle yet they cover all :  
 Short swords they use to carry and long darts,  
 To fight both neare and farre aloofe withall,  
 And of these bands the Lords and leaders are  
 The noble Earles of Ormond and Kildare.  
 Some sixteene thousand men or thereabout  
 Out of the Irish Ile at this time went."

For all their crimes, both new and old,  
Let vengeance riot uncontrolled."

## VI.

His chiefs to council Cairbre brought ;  
For victory and fame,  
One spirit in their bosoms wrought,  
Fast kindling into flame.  
By past renown in Erin's wars,  
By earth and air, sun, moon, and stars,  
They vowed—their swords from point to hilt,  
Should in their foemen's blood be gilt.  
And all resolved, among the slain  
To fall, down-trampled on the plain,  
Rather than let the Fenian host  
Their sway, one hour, in Erin boast.

## VII.

"Remember," Barron cried aloud—  
"Their deeds so insolent and proud,  
How on our fathers' necks they trod,  
Defying all—both man and God.  
Remember great heroic Conn,  
So oft with victory crowned ;  
Learned Cormac, too, his glorious son ;  
And Art, that king renowned,  
Who, on Macruim's disastrous day,  
Among our slaughtered warriors lay.  
All whom their evil counsels swayed  
They robbed, insulted, mocked, betrayed.  
Remember, too, in bygone times,  
How groaned the land beneath their crimes ;  
Their scorn of liberty and right,  
Their imposts forced in law's despite ;  
Oppressions, burnings, rapines, blood,  
The land o'erspreading like a flood ;  
Our children from their parents rent,  
Our warriors into exile sent,



Our maids far hence by ruffians torn,  
Our widowed mothers left forlorn.  
What province in our beauteous land,  
Where'er the Fenians held command,  
But mourns their cruel reign ?  
And while we live beneath their curse,  
Our state must grow still worse and worse ;  
Nor shall we Erin prosperous see,  
Till from that curse her state we free ;  
And all our rights regain—  
Till Almhuin's towers be wrapt in flame,  
Till blot we out the Fenian name,  
And all that would our land enslave,  
We crush in one promiscuous grave."

## VIII.

In accents fledged and barbed with fire,  
The chief thus roused his warriors' ire :  
And as outflew his winged words,  
They half unsheathed their beamy swords,  
With fiery looks and burning breath,  
Impatient for the work of death.  
They vowed, with fierce unbridled rage,  
Exterminating war to wage ;  
Till of the ruthless Fenian train,  
Should none alive be left ;  
Or they, down-stricken with the slain,  
Should lie of life bereft.  
And since they all were doomed to die,  
" What death more glorious," loud they cry,  
" Than now, against our country's foes,  
On Gavra's field our lives to close ?"

# THE LAY

OF

## THE BATTLE OF GAVRA.

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DUAN SECOND.  
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ARGUMENT.—When Oscar saw the royal armies arrayed, and the noble martial bearing of Cairbre at their head, he was struck with admiration, and vowed that he would meet him in single combat. At this juncture an unhappy contest arose among the chiefs for the honor of precedency in leading the van. Oscar claimed the honor for himself, Beine, the son of Breasal, insisted that he had an equal claim. Lughaidh said that he and Cuiroll would lead. The latter, by a spiteful cast of his javelin, struck Beine dead, for which he is justly reprimanded by Oscar. A battle ensues between the rival chiefs, and two hundred of the Fenians are slain. They then prepare to meet the common enemy—the standard is raised—Fergus sings the battle song. The Fenians suffer a severe loss, by a body of the enemy's reserve, led by Gerairdh, who, after a gallant fight, is with difficulty rescued by his men. Cairbre rushes to oppose Oscar, whom he wounds with a poisoned spear. Oscar, before he falls, inflicts a mortal wound on Cairbre, who is then slain by Simon, chief of the Fotharts. Seven princes of blood royal fell—the field covered with slain—the precious spoils collected. The bard laments the disastrous results of the battle, by which the Fenians were completely destroyed. The body of Oscar is conveyed on the shields of the survivors, from the spot where he fell to the side of the great Gavra, and there interred with the other slain chiefs.

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### I.

WHEN Oscar saw, not distant far,  
The foemen's shining ranks of war  
Advancing close in serried might,  
In arms with flashing splendour bright;

Their polished helms and bossy shields  
Shot long reflections o'er the fields,  
And dense as stalks of ripening corn,  
Their spear-points, radiant in the morn,  
Like constellations shone.

And many a banner floating gay  
Waved proudly o'er the long array;  
Like comets, when their sparkling hair  
Streams through the azure depths of air

And forms night's crimson zone:  
Or boreal streamers, when they glance  
Along the gold-paved heaven's expanse,  
And fiery steeds, and flaming cars,  
To battle rush among the stars.

## II.

As Cairbre towered his guards before,  
Right kingly was his look;  
The monarch's royal crown he wore,  
And a seven-barbed spear he shook.  
As on he strode with a warrior's stride,  
Might all, admiring, own  
His was the right those hosts to guide,  
And sit on Erin's throne.

## III.

Him, Oscar, now advancing nigh,  
Beheld with admiration high,  
And said, 'twould be a glorious thing  
To meet in conflict such a king.  
Nobler to die by hero's sword,  
Than live the conqueror of a horde  
Of men of no renown.  
And then he yowed that day to test  
What spirit ruled the monarch's breast,  
If worthy of a crown;  
To lay him prostrate on the heath,  
Or fall himself—his sword beneath.

## IV.

But soon among our Fenians rose,  
That first and last of Erin's woes,  
Discord—sad source of bitter strife,  
That poisons all the sweets of life;  
That reason, justice, truth, defies;  
Asunder rends all nature's ties,  
And love to hatred turns;  
Makes man a savage fierce and wild;  
Against the parent arms the child;  
And, while his anger burns,  
With venom barbs the patriot's dart,  
To fester in his country's heart;  
And rolls, in one commingling flood,  
The peasant's and the noble's blood.

## V.

'Twas thus a fatal strife began  
Our fiery chiefs among;  
When Oscar asked to lead the van  
With his Fenian squadrons strong,  
The son of Breasal, Beiné bold,  
A chief of giant strength and mould,  
Said he, with Oscar, claimed the right  
To lead his Britons to the fight,  
Nor would that right resign.  
Next Luay's son, a chief renowned,  
In many a combat victor found,  
Said he, with Cuiroll, side by side,  
The vaward of the fight would guide;  
"That right," he cried, "is mine."  
With sudden jealous fury stung,  
His fatal spear fierce Cuiroll flung,  
Unspont through Beine's heart it sped,  
And stretched him instant with the dead.



## VI.

Then Oscar wild with rage and grief,  
Aloud demanded of the chief—  
“Thou son of Finn of Cumhal’s line,  
Why hast thou slain my friend and thine?  
Oh! shameful, foul, inglorious deed!  
Is death like this our champion’s meed?”  
From Cuiroll ireful answer broke,  
And thus in furious mood he spoke:  
“If thou be Ossian’s son, I rue  
That Breasal’s son, not thee, I slew.”

## VII.

My son, inflamed with burning ire,  
The instant combat claimed,  
And, at the word, in conflict dire,  
Their clashing falchions flamed.  
With Fillan and Fiachra, I,  
In vain upraised an earnest cry  
To stay th’ inglorious strife;  
But ere we could their fury quell,  
Two hundred gallant Fenians fell,  
Untimely reft of life.

## VIII.

This combat o’er—our banners high  
We raised broad-streaming to the sky,  
Waving defiance to the pride  
Of foes that had our arms defied.  
We Fenians and the warrior bands  
Who dwelt in Leinster’s fertile lands,  
King Cairbre’s host in arms to face,  
And all the Clanna Morni race.

## IX.

Then Fergus, sweetest son of Song,  
Illustrious he our bards among,  
To rouse the courage of the fight,  
His battle-strain began;  
Thrilling the soul with fierce delight,  
The echoing chorus ran:—  
“On! Oscar, on! thou warrior good,  
As e’er in front of battle stood;  
Thou cleaver of the heroes’ shields,  
Stern shearer of their crest,  
Renowned in Erin’s foughten fields,  
Of all her chiefs the best.  
From Hugh, who wears the Connaught crown—  
From Liffey’s monarch win renown—  
From Clanna Morni’s warriors bring  
The golden torques of lord and king.  
On! Oscar, on! behold the hour  
To crush the tyrant monarch’s power.  
As rushing down the depths of air,  
The eagle swoops the flying hare,  
Upon them, in thy wrath!  
As fire-cloud swept before the gale,  
Surcharged with thunder, lightning, hail,  
Fierce havoc in its path.  
On! Oscar, on! and let them feel  
The vengeance of thy gory steel.  
Dash on through cataracts of blood;  
On! as the ocean’s roaring flood;  
Or conflagration red that sweeps  
The furze clad hills, and pine-crowned steeps;  
And through the bristling dense array,  
Resistless hew thy crimson way.  
On! on! and be the battle cry  
A glorious death, or victory!”

## X.

As loud th' inspiring war-song rose,  
We burned to grapple with our foes.  
They too, with banners flaunting high,  
Like meteors in the troubled sky,  
Came on—till all, with one consent,  
Our ranks approaching near,  
Stopped short—and to the ground down-bent  
Their knees—but not in fear—  
Then kissed the earth, a solemn tie,  
That there death-stricken they would lie,  
More willing than the victory yield,  
Or flee inglorious from the field.  
Then rising with such rustling sound  
As shakes the woods and forests round,  
When wintry mountain-torrents sweep,  
Midst shower-storms, roaring to the deep;  
Or such as echoes loud and strong  
Around the sea-girt land,  
When surges fret and foam along  
The densely-pebbled strand;  
They raised, at once, so dread, so high,  
So terrible their battle-cry;  
As if some dread earth-shivering roar  
The vaulted skies asunder tore.  
Stunned by the din, the birds in flight  
O'erhead fell, from their airy height,  
Dead—as though some death-bearing dart  
Had shot like lightning through their heart.

## XI.

We too with equal ardour burn,  
Their fierce defiance loud return,  
And on, with measured step and fleet,  
Advance their bristling front to meet.  
The trumpets clang, the bowstrings twang,  
The flint-barbed arrows fly;  
The slings' dense hail smites brazen mail,  
Like stone-showers from the sky.

And now, more near, spear crossing spear,  
Through targe and gorge is driven:  
On right and left proud helms are cleft;  
Bossed shields transpierced and riven.  
And oft, and oft, with rattling clang  
The falling warriors' armour rang:  
And where in ranks they densest stood,  
Broad lanes, as through a stately wood,  
Were hewn—and far around were spread  
In heaps the dying and the dead.—  
Blood crimsons all the plain;  
Shields clash, swords flash;  
And now the battle roars amain.

## XII.

The adverse hosts, while life remained,  
As heroes all, their cause sustained,  
With hand and heart, right-well.  
With foot to foot—with shield to shield  
They met, more prompt to die than yield—  
And where they fought they fell.  
But ah! it wrings my heart with wo,  
To tell the triumph of the foe:  
How in that onslaught Connaught Hugh  
A thousand of our Fenians slew;  
How Leinster's warriors sunk in gore,  
With Alba's clans, to rise no more;  
Like leaves that in the forest brown,  
By wintry storms are stricken down.

## XIII.

As ocean's heaving billows roll  
O'er sunken rock and sandy shoal;  
Or as on birds of feeble wing,  
The falcon rushes fierce and strong;  
So Oscar rushed on Tara's king,  
So dashed the breaking ranks among;



And with unsparing vengeance spread  
The reeking field with heaps of dead,  
Till Garay's men, in frenzied mood,  
Who had till now at distance stood  
Reserved, till danger spoke;  
In bristling ranks of sword and spear,  
To stay brave Oscar's fierce career,  
Forth like a whirlwind broke.

## XIV.

They met as angry cloud meets cloud,  
When thunders bellow long and loud;  
From stricken steel, in fitful flash,  
The lightnings darting flash on flash,  
Illumined all the glen;  
Till Garay, faint with wounds and toil,  
Sunk down upon the blood-drenched soil,  
Scarce rescued by his men,  
From Oscar's blade, ne'er known to yield  
In single fight or battle-field.

## XV.

When Cairbre saw how Oscar's blade  
Among his ranks such carnage made,  
He chafed and foamed—and, wild with rage,  
Sprang forward, eager to engage,  
And quell the hero's pride.  
With skilful aim his dart he threw,  
That with unerring vengeance flew,  
And wounded Oscar's side.  
That dart was formed with barbarous skill,  
Whome'er it struck to surely kill—  
Keen-barbed, with poison's deadly bane  
Anointed thrice, the blood to stain,  
And carry from the wounded part  
The dire infection to the heart.

## XVI.

Ere sunk the generous Oscar low,  
Unnerved beneath that cruel blow,  
At Cairbre, with a rapid bound,  
He sprang, and smote him to the ground;  
And Simon, chief of Fothart's line,  
With fiercest indignation flushed  
At Cairbre's deed, upon him rushed,  
And cleft him to the chine.

## XVII.

We Fenians too, sad cause of grief!  
Deplored the death of many a chief.  
Two hundred knights of fair renown,  
Were in that conflict cloven down.  
With thousands of our Fenian host  
Thrice six illustrious chiefs we lost,  
Each worthy of a crown.  
With streams of blood was Gavra's plain  
Deep-drenched, and strewn with heaps of slain.  
With shields and spears, and splintered mail,  
And limbs of heroes stark and pale,  
Oh! 'twas a sad and rueful sight—  
The wrecks of that disastrous fight.  
But few, alas! remained to tell  
What numbers of our Fenians fell.

## XVIII.

The battle o'er—at close of day,  
We culled, midst many a groan,  
The relics of the proud array  
That erst so brightly shone;  
Torques, brooches, rings, and precious gems,  
With jewelled spears and diadems:  
Memorials sad, in future times,  
To tell, perchance, in foreign climes,

Of Erin rich in beauty's charms,  
Her taste and skill in arts and arms :  
Memorials, too, of Erin's woes,  
When midst her chiefs fell discord rose,  
Maddening their hearts with desperate rage,  
Such fierce inglorious war to wage—  
To waste in broils and party strife,  
The sweetest, dearest, joys of life.  
Rebels to nature's strongest laws—  
Fell traitors to their country's cause,  
To kindle in their father-land  
An inextinguishable brand,  
To sacrifice, in jealous spite,  
To private wrong the public right,  
Consume her strength, her life-blood drain,  
And round her clench th' invader's chain.

## XIX.

In Gavra's sad eventful hour,  
Was broken down the Fenian power ;  
And ne'er from that disastrous fight,  
Has shone the day or gloomed the night,  
In which we wept not, and deplored  
The fearful ravage of the sword  
That wrought such bitter grief :  
For not within earth's spacious round,  
Was e'er a king or warrior found  
To match our peerless chief ;  
Nor e'er did an invading host  
In thousands swarm on Fola's coast,  
That back we drove not through the waves,  
Or weltering heaped in bloody graves.

## XX.

Upon our spear-shafts gently laid,  
Was Oscar to a mound conveyed,  
That far around the Fenians all  
Might know, and mourn their hero's fall.

North of great Gavra's side we chose  
 A heath-field for his last repose,  
 There formed his narrow bed;  
 There likewise, for two chiefs of fame,  
 Who bore the noble Oscar's name,  
 The couch of death we spread.  
 For Oscar, prince of Lochlin, one,  
 And one for Oscar, son of Glonn;  
 And for Macluay, champion true  
 As e'er a sword for conflict drew,  
 And who most richly could reward,  
 With golden praise, his minstrel bard.

My heart surcharged with bitter pain,  
 Now bids me cease my mournful strain,  
 That for such kind indulgence prays  
 As pity grants to sorrow's lays.

NOTE.—It has been asked why Finn, the son of Cumhal, was not present at the battle of Gavra, and it may be deemed a conclusive and satisfactory answer to say that he was dead twelve years prior to that event. It is also stated, in an old Irish poem, that he was then journeying to Rome—and a popular tradition assigns as another reason, that he was then in the South leaping over the chasm of *Brise Bloige*, a feat which he was bound to perform annually.

In a romance called *Feis Teigh Conain Cinnseibhe*, Finn informs us, that the first day after the death of his foster mother, who was slain by the Clanna Morni, he came to *Luachra Deaghaidh*, in the South. His clothing, at that time, was composed of the skins of deer, from which circumstance he was called *Giolla na Croicean*, i. e., "The Wight of the Hides." Seeing two large assemblies of people, one of men, and another of women, standing on the opposite sides of a deep and dangerous chasm, he inquired the cause of their meeting in that locality, and was informed that the prince of Kerry Luachra, was in love with the princess Danait of *Sighe Daire*, and she being an admirer of gymnastics, declared she would have no man for her husband till he had leaped across the chasm. The people had assembled to see the accomplishment of that task by the prince, but he failed in every attempt. Finn was then informed that the fair Danait would accept any other candidate for her love, who should fulfil the condition. Finn immediately tucked up his deer-skin garment, and with a nimble air-cleaving bound, sprang over the chasm—and with another bound sprang back again. Danait, in admiration of his activity, threw her arms around his neck, kissed him thrice, tore off his deer-skin robe, had him arrayed in more becoming apparel, and bound him by a solemn vow (*geasa*) to an annual repetition of the same achievement.



THE following Lay is taken from the Report of the Highland Society of Scotland. It is accompanied by the Gaelic original, the orthography of which will appear to the merest novice in the Irish language, to be exceedingly corrupt. Mr. Eugene Curry will perhaps be able to discover in the Irish manuscripts of the Royal Irish Academy, some genuine copy of this Lay, which is by no means destitute of poetical merit.

*"The Author of this is Fergus the Bard."*

"Tell us Fergus,  
Thou bard from Erin's heroes,  
How it fared with our people  
In the battle of Gavra of wounds."  
"Not good, son of Cumhal,  
Is my report from the battle of Gavra.  
The beloved Oscar will not survive,  
He who subdued the mighty.  
Nor will the seven sons of Caoilt,  
A band terrible as an host.  
The young-heroes of Fingal fell,  
Adorned with a robe of fame.  
The sons of Louach fell,  
The six sons and the father.  
The youth of Albion fell,  
Slain are the heroes of Britain.  
Fallen is the king of Leithlen's son,  
Who always gave us his aid.  
Generous and hardy was his heart;  
Strong at all times was his arm."  
"But tell me, bard!  
The son of my son, and of my loins,  
Oscar, how did he hew down the terrible battle?"  
"It were hard to relate,  
Great were the task to tell,  
The numbers slain in that battle,  
Who fell by the arms of Oscar.  
Not swifter the cataract of a river,  
Nor a hawk darting on a flight of birds;  
Nor stronger the force of the foaming torrent,  
Than Oscar in that battle.  
He was, at last, like a branch  
That opposes a furious wind,  
Or like a tree which budding green  
Resists the stroke of the woodman.  
When he perceived the king of Erin  
In the midst of his host,  
Forward Oscar rushed,  
As rolls a wave to the shore.  
As Cairbar saw him approach,  
He wielded his keen spear,  
And pierced him through with its point——  
Our chief cause of woe!  
Nor yet did Oscar turn,  
But forward pushed to Erin's king:  
A wound with might he gave,  
Which proved the strength of his blade.  
He struck Art, the son of Cairbar,  
With the second stroke.  
So fell that hero,  
Graced with his royal crown.  
I am Fergus the bard,  
Who have traversed many lands:  
Alas! that I survive the heroes,  
To relate the tale of woe!"

# FATAL RESULTS

OF

## THE BATTLE OF GAVRA.

---

IN a subsequent conference, Patrick asks Ossian what were the consequences of the battle of Gavra, and how the shores of Erin were to be guarded from foreign invasion when all her Fenian defenders were slain. In reply, he is informed that the country was left in a very deplorable state, and might have been easily conquered by the arms of any bold invader.

---

PATRICK.—When fell the gallant Fenian host,  
What powers were left to guard the coast,  
Should bold invaders, on the strand  
In armed and plundering legions, land ?

OSSIAN.—Had lord or king then dared assail  
The verdant fields of Innisfail,  
Yea, dared her crown to claim ;  
An easy conquest he had made  
Without the spear's or falchion's aid ;  
For left was none, with sword or spear,  
To stay a conqueror's proud career,  
Or ask him whence he came.  
In Banba's fair and ample round,  
Was not a prince, or hero, found,  
Who with courageous heart and hand,  
Could shield from chains his father-land.  
No, by thy truth, was none, I swear,  
But men oppressed with age and care ;  
Maids, widows, mothers, who deplored  
The cruel ravage of the sword,  
And youths, who ne'er had learned to wield  
A hostile blade, or strike a shield.

# THE LAY

OF

## THE DEATH OF OSCAR.

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ARGUMENT.—Ossian, it may be supposed, in compliance with the request of Patrick, as usual, says that though his heart is oppressed with grief, he will record the death of Oscar, his son, and of King Cairbre, at the battle of Gavra. He speaks of Cairbre as inflamed with wrath, shaking his poisoned spear, and the raven as foreboding Oscar's death. With the design of provoking a quarrel, Cairbre proposes to exchange the head of his spear for that of Oscar, which was probably held in high estimation for having nine barbs on its point of steel, and being the favourite spear of his father.\* Oscar declines the proposal with the irritating reply that Cairbre would not have made it, but in the absence of Finn and the Fenians. Cairbre retorts that though the Fenians were present, he would, in defiance of them all, take, as his own, whatever he chose to ask—and to Oscar's declaration, that if they existed but in half their former force, he should never possess a foot of ground in Erin, he threatens that, on the next day, he will pursue the chase, and drive to his own place of residence the herds of Almhuin. Oscar declares that he will drive them back again—and on the following morning, to anticipate Cairbre, he drove twelve fat beeves from each of the provinces around Tara, the royal palace. Here is abruptly introduced a short episode—in which Oscar addresses a prophetic Nymph of the well, and asks what will be the issue of the approaching conflict. On being told that it would be fatal to some of the chiefs, he requests her not to divulge it, lest it should dispirit his men. The Fenians soon met Cairbre with his forces in battle array—and Oscar performs many signal acts of valour, while passing through the ranks of fight in search of the king. At last they meet, and Cairbre with his poisoned lance pierces the body of Oscar, who inflicts a desperate wound on Cairbre's forehead, and strikes him to the ground, where, as he lies, he calls on Art to hasten to his assistance. Him, in the act of aiming his dart, Oscar lays prostrate, and the royal crown being seized by the Fenians, is broken on the stump of a tree, and the fragments scattered on the dust. Oscar, suffering intensely from his wounds, calls on the Fenians to bear him from the field, and the Bard, in a

\* Macpherson informs us that "Cormac, the son of Arth, had given the spear, which is here the foundation of the quarrel, to Oscar, when he came to congratulate him upon Swaran's being expelled from Ireland!"

brief apostrophe to the hero, laments that his death is nigh. Finn, who was celebrated for his medical skill, comes to give him all the relief in his power, and to express the hope that his remedies may succeed now, as on former occasions, in healing his wounds. Oscar replies that all such hopes are vain. He is borne on shields to the residence of Finn, and is deeply and pathetically deplored by all his friends and followers. The lay concludes with Finn's lamentation for the death of his son, and the Bard's declaration that no time could ever efface or mitigate his grief.

Dr. Young says that "the death of Oscar in the first book of Macpherson's *Temora* is grounded on this poem, and many passages of it are literally translated; but great liberties, as usual, have been taken with the original." *Trans. R. I. A.*, vol. I., p. 106. Macpherson, indeed, admits that he had a copy of it in his hands—but, as usual, he misquotes it, changes *Almhuin* of Leinster, into *Albin*, his Scotland, and invents names and facts to suit his purpose. Oscar, in the genuine Irish poem, says that Cairbre would not make his proposal to exchange spears, if Finn and his Fenians were present, but in Macpherson's poem, Cairbre says to Oscar, "are thy words so mighty because Fingal is near! Fingal with aged locks from Morven's hundred groves. He has fought with little men. But he must vanish before Cairbre like a thin pillar of mist before the winds of Atha."

This is one of the most imaginative of the lays ascribed to Ossian. The transitions are abrupt and sudden. The unpremeditated expression of the feelings of the Bard, as the various incidents spontaneously occurred to his mind.

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### I.

To-NIGHT, though grief my bosom wring,  
Yet will not Ossian cease to sing.  
Oscar, my son, and Cairbre brave,  
At Gavra found a bloody grave.

### II.

In ire fierce Cairbre's hand is high  
As he shakes the poisoned spear,  
And the raven says with an anguished cry,  
That Oscar's death is near.  
And in his breast these thoughts have stirred,  
"Am I the black ill-boding bird.\*"

\* *Sæpe sinistra cava prædixit ab ilice cornix.*

Ritson in his "Ancient Songs—from the time of King Henry the Third to the Revolution," has one entitled "THE THREE RAVENS, a Dirge—From Ravenscroft's *Melismata*. Lond, 1611, 4to. It will be obvious that this



Those five their table-cheer enjoy ;  
 No battle-fears their hearts annoy.  
 Their cheeks to-morrow, on the field,  
 A feast will to the raven yield."

OSCAR.—Let not the Fians hear the tale,  
 Lest idle fears their hearts assail.

## III.

CAIRBRE.—Exchange we lances\*—not, I mean,  
 The polished shafts, but steel-barbs keen.

OSCAR.—Nay, just I deem not such demand,  
 For the seven blunt-barbs of thy willow wand  
 To ask my keen-edged nine.  
 This nine-barbed ash, in days of yore  
 Oft shone the Fenian ranks before ;  
 With life I'll hold it mine.

ballad is much older not only than the date of the book, but than most of the other pieces contained in it."

There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
 They were as blacke as they might be :  
 The one of them said to his mate,  
 "Where shall we our breakfast take ?"

Sir Walter Scott remarks it as a singular circumstance that the little song of "The Twa Corbies," written down by tradition from a lady, and published in his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," should coincide so very nearly with the ancient dirge called *The Three Ravens* ; and that at the same time there should exist such a difference, as to make the one appear rather a counterpart than a copy of the other."

May not the soliloquy of the solitary raven, in the Irish poem, foreboding the death of Oscar, and while contemplating the chiefs at their repast, enjoying the thought that on the following day, they would themselves be the raven's food, be justly supposed more ancient than either of the other two compositions, in which the prophetic character of the ill-boding bird (*μαντις κακῶν*) is unnoticed ? As it is usual with imitators to amplify, and, if they can, *improve* the first simple idea, we might conclude, independently of external evidence, that the Irish Raven can boast a higher antiquity than the Twa Scotch Corbies and *The Three Ravens of the Old English Dirge*.

\* Macpherson says, "It was a custom among the ancient Scots to exchange arms with their guests, and those arms were preserved long in the different families, as monuments of the friendship which subsisted between their ancestors."

He thus amplifies Cairbre's speech :—

"Oscar," said the dark-red Cairbre, "I behold the spear of Erin. The spear of Temora glitters in thy hand, son of woody Morven ! It was the pride of an hundred kings. The death of heroes of old. Yield it, son of Ossian, yield it to car-borne Cairbre !"

If nigh me now my Fenians stood,  
Or Finn, my sire, still just and good,  
Of such exchange we ne'er should hear  
As Oscar's lance for Cairbre's spear!

CAIRBRE.—Yea, tho' the Fenians stood around,  
And thy noble sire beside,  
As many and strong as they e'er were found  
In the days of their loftiest pride,  
By virtue of this arm alone,  
Whate'er I asked should be my own.

OSCAR.—Were the Fenians by in half their prime  
With my sire, thy boasts were vain.  
Of ground not a foot in green Erin's clime  
Should ever own thy reign.

## IV.

Forth red-haired Cairbre's anger broke,  
And furious were the words he spoke;  
Loud boasting, on the following morn,  
To urge the chase with hound and horn,  
And, far from Almhuin's fields away,  
To drive the herds as his rightful prey.  
As fierce was Oscar's bold reply,  
That he his hunting skill would try,  
And, back to Almhuin's fair domain,  
Repel the stolen herds again.

## V.

In banquet hall the Fians spent  
The night, till coming morn;  
But Cairbre gave his fury vent  
In words and looks of scorn:  
With equal anger Oscar burned,  
And back his looks and threats returned.

## VI.

Our host arose with the mottled dawn,  
 And away we sped o'er the dewy lawn ;  
 And as our souls decreed,  
 From each fair province of the land  
 Twelve lusty beeves, with spear in hand,  
 We drove away with speed.

## VII.

OSCAR.—O maid, who in the crystal well\*  
 Dost rinse thy garments fair ;  
 What fortune, truly to us tell,  
 Shall we in conflict share.  
 Say, shall we triumph o'er the foe,  
 Or vanquished, unavenged, lie low ?

MAID.—By you five hundred shall be slain ;  
 The king himself shall bite the plain,  
 By death-wound from the spear.  
 He too, who next him stands in power,  
 Shall wounded fall. A fatal hour  
 To all your host is near.†

OSCAR.—O maid, this tale prophetic hide  
 From Rosg-Mac-Roi and all beside  
 Who face our martial clan ;  
 Nor let our Fians hear the tale,  
 Lest fear should o'er their hearts prevail,  
 Dispirit and unman.

## VIII.

As to a glen's straight gorge we drew,  
 The valiant Cairbre met our view,  
 Prepared, with all his gallant band,  
 To meet our warriors hand to hand.

\* "Oscar is here supposed, while marching off with his booty, to meet a young woman early in the morning, whom he conceives endued with the gift of prophecy. It is an opinion still prevailing in Ireland, that the first woman you meet with in the morning is a witch."—DR. YOUNG.

† *Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus.*

Five score of champions, strong and brave,  
From Alba fenced with many a rock,  
Who crossed in Cairbre's cause the wave,  
The Fians met in battle shock,  
And fell, by Oscar's steel-blade's swing,  
As fierce he rushed at Erin's king.

Five score stout heroes, who ne'er knew  
A backward step in battle field,  
Well armed with swords of azure hue,  
Were quickly forced to yield,  
Down stricken by the steel-blade's swing—  
As Oscar rushed at Erin's king.

Five score keen archers skilled to send  
The arrow hissing from the bow,  
Who came their aid in fight to lend  
To Cairbre, were laid low;  
Struck prostrate by the steel-blade's swing  
Of Oscar rushing at the king.

Five score tall stalwart spear-men strong,  
From the land of snow and hail,  
With danger's deeds familiar long,  
Found all their valour fail;  
And fell beneath the steel-blade's swing  
Of Oscar rushing on the king.

Five score illustrious chiefs, the best  
Of red-haired Cairbre's power,  
The might of Fenian arms confest  
As they met in evil hour,  
And felt with what impetuous force  
His blade could Oscar swing,  
To shear them down in his crimson course,  
As he rushed on Erin's king.\*

\* Thus fell five times five score, or five hundred, of his foes, by the sword of Oscar, according to the prophecy of the Maiden of the Well.



## IX.

When dark-red Cairbre saw, with grief,  
 Man fall on man, and chief on chief,  
 By Oscar's sword, with furious look  
 The poisoned spear\* in his hand he shook,  
 And hurled, with dextrous aim,  
 On his right knee as Oscar bent,  
 Straight on the poisoned weapon went  
 Sheer through his manly frame.†  
 But Oscar, with his nine-barbed steel,  
 On the forehead's hairy bound  
 Struck Cairbre red, and made him reel  
 Sore-wounded to the ground.

## X.

CAIRBRE.—Up! Art, arise! thy brand  
 Firm-grasping, boldly smite—

\* At the reading of a paper in the Royal Irish Academy, Nov. 30, 1848, on some antiquarian relics in the collection of the Earl of Rosse, the Rev. Dr. Robinson, now president of that institution, said "that the practice, he feared, of using poisoned weapons was not unknown among the ancient Irish, as, indeed, it seems to have prevailed among all the Celtic and Iberian tribes. Thus in the poem on the death of Oscar, the spear of Cairbre is expressly said to be *poisoned*, and nothing seems to require a figurative sense of this epithet to be understood."

The use of poison, and of poisoned weapons, is noticed not unfrequently in Irish history. When the Cruithneans landed at Inbhear Slaine, they had to fight against a tribe of Britons named Tnatha Fidga, who fought with such arms. A Druid taught them to neutralize the poison by bathing in the milk of white-faced hornless cows. Oilliol Olum, to whose shame the story must be told, ran his spear through the body of a young lady with such force that, striking a stone, the iron point became bent. He endeavoured to straighten it with his teeth, and the metal being strongly imbued with venom imparted to his breath a smell too nauseous to be endured. Mung Fion, sister of King Criomthan, prepared a dose of poison for him to take him out of the way of her son's succession to the throne. She succeeded in her design, but, like Cæsar Borgia, tasted the fatal cup, and died by her own wicked contrivance. Some savages are said to dip their arrows into the poison of the Upas tree, which imparts to them a deadly fatality. Those who know with what venom or "leporous distilment," the ancient Irish imbued their weapons, will do well to keep the secret, especially since poisoning is a crime by no means of rare occurrence.

† Macpherson is unjust to Cairbre in representing him as taking a stealthy and cowardly advantage of his antagonist.

"Cairbre shrinks before Oscar's sword. He creeps in darkness behind a stone. He lifts the spear in secret; he pierces my Oscar's side. He falls forward on his shield; his knee sustains the chief. But still his spear is in his hand. See gloomy Cairbre falls! The steel pierced his forehead, and divided his red hair behind."—*Temora*, Book I.

Where stood thy father, stand !  
If thou survive the fight,  
In peace and glory mayst thou reign  
O'er Erin's fair domain !

## XI.

Another spear my Oscar flung,  
Well aimed with skill and strength ;  
On Art's bright mail it loudly rung,  
And stretched him at his length,  
E'en while his own swift dart was sped,  
With erring aim, at Oscar's head.

## XII.

The royal crown on the stump of a tree  
They placed, to tell his victory.  
By a hill's red side, on the swelling ground,  
They raised a firm and even mound,  
And, on the trunk of an aged oak,  
The golden crown in pieces broke,  
Then down the glittering fragments cast.—  
Of his glorious deeds, this was Oscar's last.

## XIII.

OSCAR.—Lift, lift me up—ye Fians kind !  
These heavy garments quick unbind ;  
In such sad office, ne'er before  
Did I your friendly aid implore.  
Oh ! bear me to the sunny hill,  
To fragrant heath and cooling rill.

## XIV.

Ah ! son of victory, too true  
Thy second wound has told ;  
Death claims thee as his due—  
Too late thy grand-sire bold

Comes with his gallant fleet, to give  
His friendly aid and bid thee live.  
The Fians to Finn fond greeting gave ;  
But he hailed them not again,  
For he hied with the hope his son to save ;  
Alas ! that hope was vain.  
To the hill of tears he sped his way,  
Where, wounded to death, his Oscar lay.

## XV.

FINN.—Upon Dundalgan's field of strife  
In greater peril was thy life,  
My son—when healing herbs I brought,  
And staunched thy wounds with speed ;  
A cure my potent medicine wrought,  
And may again succeed.

OSCAR.—'Tis past all skill, O father dear,  
In anguish though you mourn.  
Red Cairbre's poisoned seven-barbed spear  
Has through my vitals torn.  
But him I pierced on the forehead fair,  
With my nine-barbed points of steel,  
And gave such wound as no leache's care,  
Nor earthly power can heal.

FINN.—In greater peril was thy life,  
Upon Ben-Eadair's field of strife,  
My son—when healing herbs I brought,  
And staunched thy wounds with speed ;  
A cure my potent medicine wrought,  
And may again succeed.

OSCAR.—O sire, the pangs that I endure,  
Are past all skill—beyond all cure ;  
No leach on earth can stem the tide  
That oozes from my wounded side.

## XVI.

Then raise we Oscar's noble frame  
Gently upon our shields—and bear,  
Till to the house of Finn we came  
Oppressed with heavy care.  
Our dogs beside us howling crept;  
Deep groaned each warrior chief;  
The Fians all deep-sorrowing wept;  
Rent was my heart with grief.  
No mother, for her darling son,  
Rained tear-drops from her eye;  
No brother, for a brother gone,  
Sent forth a bitter cry;  
For Oscar, all their sorrows shed;  
All wept the noble Oscar dead.

## XVII.

FINN.—Beloved! beloved! my Oscar mild!  
Beloved of all whom most I prize!  
Son of my son! my darling child!  
Ne'er more shall Oscar rise!  
Pants as a bird's my stricken heart,  
Fluttering in wo from thee to part!

## XVIII.

To Finn time brought no sweet relief,  
Nor gave his sorrows rest;  
While life remained, the grief of grief  
Ne'er vanished from his breast;  
Nor could the world his loss repay,  
Though all were brought to own his sway.



# THE LAY

OF

## OSSIAN'S COURTSHIP OF EVIRALLIN.

(EAMHUIR ALLUIN, i. e. *the beautiful precious gem*.—E. C.)

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THE following account of this Lay is extracted from the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Polite Literature, p. 52 :—

“Ossian, when advanced in years, being oppressed with extreme hunger, had recourse to a young woman who had often supplied him with milk. She made him some proposal which did not suit the delicacy of his feelings ; and, on his refusal, she called him an old *dog*. This song was his reply to her on this occasion. We cannot too much admire the ingenious and poetical manner in which Mr. Macpherson has introduced this little poem as an episode, in the fourth Book of Fingal.”

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ARGUMENT.—The Bard gently rebukes the maiden who had applied to him an opprobrious epithet, and reminds her, that though he was now old and feeble, he was once an object of esteem and admiration, both as a lover and warrior. He makes good his assertion by giving an account of the mode in which he obtained the hand of the beautiful Evirallin. On a certain occasion, he, with his gallant compeers, went on a warlike expedition, and, on their way, called at the mansion of Bran, from whom they met a courteous reception. On his asking the cause of their visit, Caoilte replied that they came to ask his daughter to accept Ossian as her husband. Bran, justly estimating the honour of this overture, introduces the company into the *Grianan Corr*, or sunny reception hall, where sat Evirallin of the golden locks, in all her beauty—

“A mutual flame was quickly caught,  
Was quickly too revealed;”

And Evirallin became the wife of the Bard. The scene now suddenly changes—war succeeds to love—the warriors proceeded on their march to Drum-da-horc, where Cormac, the enemy whom they meant to attack, lay with seven bands of armed men, whose leaders are named and characterised, as are also those of the Fenians. As a prelude to the general conflict, a duel is fought by two of the adverse champions, Ogar and Daol, in which Daol is slain. The engagement then commences, and terminates in the defeat of Cormac, whose head is cut off by Ossian, and from an eminence exposed to the view of the army.

## I.

Not me, in thy discourteous mood,  
 But one of manners coarse and rude,  
 Call dog, vain girl ! The time has been  
 When, with the noblest, I was seen  
 In battle's front to show my breast,  
 Though now by grief and age oppressed.  
 What time we went to see the fair  
 Bright Eir of the golden hair;  
 White-handed maid, whose love in vain  
 The haughty Cormac sought to gain.

## II.

To Lego's lake we bent our way ;  
 Twelve warriors formed our whole array,  
 But hearts more brave beneath the sun  
 In earth's wide circuit, beat not one.  
 Our firm resolve now wouldst thou know ?  
 'Twas this—to battle with the foe,  
 Or swift compel to fly.  
 Bran, Leacan's son, with greeting bland,  
 Gave frank warm welcome to our band,  
 His home approaching nigh.  
 "What cause your steps has hither led ?"  
 He asked in friendly guise.  
 "To ask your daughter fair to wed"—  
 Young Caoilte thus replies.

BRAN.—"As spouse for whom, ye Fenians brave,  
 Would you my gentle daughter crave ?"

CAOILTE.—"For Ossian—him supreme among  
 The sweetest of the sons of Song."

BRAN.—"Thou noble chief, renowned in fight,  
 Such honour high I may not slight.  
 And let me add, in truth,

Had I twelve daughters passing fair,  
 And rich in all endowments rare,  
 Your Ossian is the youth  
 That from them all might choose a wife,  
 To be the solace of his life.  
 Such is his high and honoured name  
 Among the Fenian sons of fame."

## III.

The sun-bright court of polished stone\*  
 Was to our warriors open thrown ;  
 And there, in all her blooming grace,  
 Of matchless beauty, form, and face,  
 Was lovely Eir seen.  
 Amazed we saw, a maid so fair,  
 With clustering locks of golden hair,  
 And hailed her as a queen.

\* NOTE.—In the Appendix to the Report of the Highland Society, containing a comparison of passages extracted from ancient Gaelic poems, and parts of Macpherson's *Fingal*, we meet a description of Eirallin's reception chamber thus translated :—

The chamber so highly prized is opened.  
 It was covered above with the down of birds.  
 Its doors were yellow with gold,  
 And the side-posts were of polished bone.

Dr. C. O'Connor, indignant that these lines, and those descriptive of Finn's standard, "full studded with stones in gold," should be ascribed to Ossian, expresses his indignation thus :—

"Quid si nec Carthaginis Arces, nec mœnia surgentia ibi videret, nec Templum Junonis, ærea cui surgebant limina, at certe splendidiore videret Finni insignia, et aulam, cui portæ lucentes auro, et gemmis fulgentes, quæ Pygmalionis ipsius opes, his versibus, a quodam Ludimagistro compositis, manifeste indicarent—

'Insignia Finni, ferox eorum intextus,  
 Omnino ornata Margaritis in auro !'"

*Report*, p. 248.

"Aperitur Regia magnifica,  
 Cujus laqueare coopertum plumis avium!  
 Portæ ejus auro fulco celatæ,  
 Et postes ex ossibus limatis !" —p. 236.

O'CONNOR, *Rer. Hib. Scrip.* I., p. cxxvi—vii.

If the learned Doctor thought such magnificence not accordant with the age and country of Ossian, he was surely under a great mistake. There are many descriptions, both in ancient Irish historical, and poetical, records, more indicative of wealth and splendour, than those which have fallen under his sarcastic animadversion.

On me she smiled with look benign,  
 On me her love bestowed—  
 With mutual flame our bosoms glowed,  
 And she was wholly mine.

## IV.

\* \* \* \* \*

On deeds of high achievement bent,  
 To Drum-da-hore we boldly went,  
 Where Cormac for our coming lay  
 With seven armed bands in dense array.  
 Of triumph sure they thither came,  
 In all their shining pride;  
 Like to a bright and bickering flame  
 Along the mountain side.

## V.

Eight champions strong to conflict bred,  
 Of Firbolg race, great Cormac led ;  
 Stout Durra, marked with many a scar ;  
 The son of Toscar, famed in war ;  
 Macalla, Taog, Freasdal young,  
 A chief from Erin's monarchs sprung :  
 Daire ne'er in action slow or cold,  
 And stalwart Daol tough and bold ;  
 Great Cormac's standard-bearer he,  
 Ne'er known to blench, to yield, or flee.

## VI.

Eight champions, too, your Ossian leads,  
 All equal in heroic deeds.  
 Mulla, MacScein, and Fial strong,  
 And Schelecha, a chief among  
 The Fenian host ; with Fillan paired  
 Rough Carol of the bushy beard ;  
 Dunrivan, who, still undismayed,  
 Could wield in fight no gentle blade ;  
 And Ogar, with his warlike band,  
 Against the Firbolgs took their stand.



## VII.

Eager for fight, upon the green,  
 Two champions sprang the hosts between;  
 And there engaged in open space,  
 Ogar and Daol,\* face to face,  
 And well each chief sustained his part  
 With ward and thrust, with strength and art.  
 Such contest storms with ocean wage,  
 When forth they sally in their rage,  
 And by the hoarse-resounding shore,  
 The thundering billows chafe and roar.  
 So fight, as foreign bards have sung,  
 Two lions fierce with fury stung;  
 And while they fought with equal skill  
 To push, to parry, and to ward,  
 The blood, in many a crimson rill,  
 Soon tinged the grass-green sward.  
 Till grappled close, in pressing need,  
 His skein brave Ogar seized with speed,  
 Deep plunged it in his foe-man's side,  
 And nine times sluiced life's crimson tide;  
 Yet Daol fought all drenched with gore—  
 Then fell—to rise no more.

## VIII.

As sledges on the anvils sound,  
 And stun the rustics gathered round,  
 So did their contest dire  
 Both armies stun—till foes with foes  
 Commingling fought—blows answered blows,

\* In Dr. Young's copy of the original Gaelic, *Toscair*, it is presumed, has by mistake been substituted for *Ogar*—for *Toscair* and *Daol* were both in the army of Cormac. Moreover the names of the duellists are the *Ogar* and *Dala* of the fourth book of Macpherson's *Fingal*. "Ogar met Dala the strong, face to face, on the field of heroes. The battle of the chiefs was like wind, on ocean's foamy waves. The dagger is remembered by Ogar, the weapon which he loved. Nine times he drowned it in Dala's side. The stormy battle turned. Three times I broke on Cormac's shield: three times he broke his spear. But, unhappy youth of love! I cut his head away. Five times I shook it by the lock."

And Ossian, with resistless might,  
Swept through the densest ranks of fight,  
A hurricane of fire.  
Full fifty bossy shields he cleft,  
And on the blood-drenched mountain left.  
And Cormac, too, with fracturing stroke,  
Full fifty swords in fragments broke.  
But ere night's sable shades were spread,  
Had I from Cormac shorn the head.  
By the grisly locks that head I shook,  
As my station on a mound I took,  
That the warrior chiefs of Innisfail  
Might see—and loud our victory hail.  
Stout should have been the chief, and bold—  
Sharp, too, his steel—who then had told  
That I should fall thus low.  
Thus helpless, friendless, lie forlorn,  
Of all my former glories shorn,  
Thus sunk in want and woe.  
Well would my keen avenging blade  
Such coarse rude insult have repaid.

# THE LAY

OF

## THE CHASE OF SLIEVE-NA-MAN.

SLIABH-NA-MBAN, pronounced *Slieve-na-Man*, is a mountain in the county of Tipperary, a few miles distant from the *honey-vale* of Clonmel. It is marked in the Ordnance Survey, as 2,364 feet in height, and is a very conspicuous object to a wide extent of the surrounding country, which, Mrs. Hall says, "may be emphatically called an Ossianic locality." According to our learned antiquary, General Vallancey, it was once, as its name indicates, sacred to the Sun, the universal object of heathen worship.

"Mann, i.e. Deus. Dia Main, Dia Neimh, i.e. The God of Heaven, the Sun; (thus, A. Bishop Cormac, in his Gloss.) This was the *Amanus* of the Persians (Strabo)—written by the Old Persians, Mana, (Hyde, p. 178) *Ammon* nomen Jovis apud Ægyptios. He was named *Orbison* by the Old Irish, a corruption of Ormoz. This deity spread from North to South, in the Oriental world. \* \* \* There are several mountains in Ireland dedicated to Mann."—VALLANCEY'S *Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland*, pp. 507, 508.

The legend connected with the following Lay had its origin, probably, in the ambiguity of the term *Mban*, which signifies *women*. When the worship of Man, the Sun, ceased, the mountain still retained its name, but lost its primitive meaning. Then it became an object of inquiry, to know why it was called *Slieve-na-Mban*—the women's mountain. Invention being set to work, the words *Fionna Eirion*—the fair, or beautiful (women) of Erin, were added; and, as Mr. and Mrs. Hall's Ireland informs us, tradition assigns the following legend as the origin of the appellation:—

"Fin-Mac-Cual wishing to take a wife, and being puzzled 'whom to choose' among the fair daughters of his land, caused all the beautiful women of Ireland to assemble at the foot of this mountain, declaring that whoever first reached the summit should be his bride. Fin then proceeded to the top of the mountain, and having taken his seat on the Druid's altar that crowns it, made a signal to the group of anxious fair ones that waited his signal below. Away, away, they went, through wood and heath, and furze, over crag and mountain-stream; all obstacles appeared nought with such a prize in view. But only one was destined to win. Grainé, the daughter of Cormac, monarch of Ireland, arrived first at the summit, claimed the hand of the Fenian chief, to whom she was accordingly united. Such is the romantic origin of the name of this mountain. *Slieve-na-man*

is also celebrated in tradition as having been the scene of the most celebrated hunting-match of the Fenians, the best description of which is contained in an ancient poem in the possession of Mr. Wright, ascribed to Ossian, and taken from a collection made in the neighbourhood of the very mountain referred to in it. It is in the form of a dialogue between the Bard of Almuin and St. Patrick. The reader will perceive the close coincidence between it and part of the conclusion of the sixth book of Macpherson's *Fingal*."

This account is followed by a "strictly literal" translation of the poem, with the exception of the two concluding stanzas. There is a copy of the original in the manuscript collections of the Royal Irish Academy, which Mr. Eugene Curry kindly translated for the author. The passage in Macpherson's *Fingal*, in which a "close coincidence" with the Irish poem has been observed, is the following:—

"Call," said Fingal, "call my dogs, the long-bounding sons of the chase. Call white-breasted Bran, and the surly strength of Luath. \* \* Blow the horn that the joy of the chase may arise, that the deer of Cromla may hear and start at the lake of roes. The shrill sound spreads along the wood. The sons of heathy Cromla arise. A thousand dogs fly off at once, grey-bounding through the heath. A deer fell by every dog; three by the white-breasted Bran."—*Fingal*, Book vi.

In the Irish poem, the number of hounds is three thousand, which Macpherson himself seems to have thought beyond credibility, and reduced the number to one thousand. Dr. C. O'Connor wonders that so extravagant a fiction should be ascribed to Ossian.

"Miror sane viros alioquin doctos, a partium studiis ita abreptos fuisse, ut ea quæ sequuntur de *Finni* venatione figmenta Oissino tribuenda censerent:—

Solvimus *ter mille canes*  
Celeriores et ferociiores,  
Et occidit quisque *Canis duos cervos!*"

*Report of the Highland Society, Edinb. 1805, p. 258.*

"Fausta quidem dies! Prospera venatio! *Æneas* esuriens *septem* tantum cervos in Libya occidit. Miser! si sorte ei evenisset Scotiam adire!"—*REB. HIS. SCRIPT. I., p. cxxvi.*

The good Doctor should have remembered that we are now in the land of romance, and the very extravagance of the fiction is a sufficient guarantee against its being mistaken, or intended to be received, as a reality.

The chase of the wild boar was one of the most dangerous and exciting pastimes of the Ossianic heroes, who are occasionally designated by Macpherson as "stern hunters of the shaggy boar." In their conflicts with this formidable animal they were sometimes worsted. "Dargo, king of spears, fell before a boar;" but to slay the monster, was an achievement worthy of the song of the bard. "Trenmor pursued the boar that roared through the woods of Gormal; many had fled from its presence, but it rolled in death on the spear of Trenmor." The honour of killing such game was so highly prized that it became a subject of deadly contention. "In strife met two kings in Ithorno, Culgorm and Suran-dronlo: each from his echoing isle, stern hunters of the boar! They met a boar at a foamy stream:



each pierced him with his spear. They strove for the fame of the deed ; and gloomy battle rose."

It was also a point of honour to be the first to throw a dart, or inflict a wound, on the object of attack. Macpherson informs us that a war arose between Starno and Torcul Torno, in consequence of the latter having committed a breach of privilege in killing a boar before Starno, to whom that privilege belonged, as he was a stranger and an invited guest. Torcul Torno was slain, and his party totally defeated. This fact may remind the reader of the cruel punishment inflicted by Alexander the Great on Hermolaus, for anticipating him in casting a javelin at a boar. "*Hermolaus puer nobilis ex regia cohorte, quum aprum telo occupasset, quem rex ferire destinaverat, jussu ejus verberibus adfectus est.*"—*Q. Curtius*, viii. 6.

Of the formidable nature of this animal, and how worthy it was deemed of being pursued and attacked by kings and heroes of old, we may judge from its being one of the twelve labours of Hercules to capture the Erymanthian boar, and present him alive to Eurystheus, who fainted at the sight—from the history, told by Herodotus, of the Mysian boar, in the encounter with which the son of Cræsus fell by an ill-aimed blow intended for the beast—and from the history of the Calydonian boar, that kept a whole province in alarm, till wounded by an arrow from the bow of the courageous Atalanta, and slain by Meleager, who, gallantly and chivalrously, attributed the honour of the conquest, as became a high-minded chevalier, to the fair lady, saying, "*Meritum feres virtutis honorem*—a compliment justly due to her valour, and worthy of being immortalized in the song of Publius Ovidius Naso, the most fertile in fancy and beautiful in description, of all the Ausonian bards.

So fond of this pastime were our Ossianic heroes, that for lack of substantial boars, they "pursued boars of mist, along the skirts of winds."

The wild boar furnishes a striking comparison to poets. Homer compares Idomeneus waiting the attack of Æneas to a wild boar that waits

"a coming multitude  
Of boisterous hunters."

Virgil, too, compares Mezentius, surrounded by enemies, to the same animal when immeshed in the hunters' toils, and assailed from a distance by their missiles, which he shakes from his brawny sides, gnashing his teeth, and snorting defiance.

"Speaking of boars," we must not forget or overlook the most renowned of all the brindled tusky brood, even him who was brought captive by the little Cupids, to plead his defence for killing the beloved of Aphrodite, and who spoke in his defence with such affecting eloquence, that the goddess was melted to compassion, and took him into "her train"—as is sweetly sung by the sweetest of pastoral poets, in an Idyl beginning thus, as "done into English by M. J. Chapman, M.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge."

"Cypris when she saw Adonis  
Cold and dead as any stone is ;  
All his dark hair out of trim,  
And his fair cheek deadly dim,  
Thither charged the Loves to lead  
The cruel boar that did the deed."

The race of wild-boars, with that of the wolf, of the bear, and of the gigantic deer (*cervus megaceras*), has long been extinct in Ireland. It still exists in some parts of the European continent, and furnishes a subject of great excitement, not devoid of peril to the hunter. Frazer's Magazine for October, 1846, contains an animated account of a boar-hunt in Brittany, connected, like the chase of Slieve-na-man, with the chase of the deer. For the gratification of our sporting friends, the following extracts from it are offered to their perusal:—

"On a stout roadster was mounted a stalwart fellow, with black moustache, and a shaggy beard reaching to his chest. In his hand he carried a heavy hunting whip, and on one side of his *demipique* saddle hung a bunch of hounds' bells, balanced on the other by a knot of couples. He wore a *casquet de chasse*, and his long green velvet frock was secured by a broad leathern belt, in which was a *coteau de chasse*, in a silver-mounted scabbard, and fastened by a buckle embossed with a shield of a large silver boar's head. A French horn hung over his left shoulder, and passed under the opposite arm, crossed by a leather thong, bearing a short, stout javelin, or spear, which was slung across his buck leather pantaloons, fitting tight to his athletic person, and Hessian boots of the same untanned material, formed the costume of a mounted *garde de chasse*. Behind this formidable personage trooped some thirty couple of hounds, wayworn and weary, as was betrayed by their lolling tongues.

"The hounds were of a peculiar breed, much larger than our fox-hounds, and altogether unlike them; powerful in bone, and for the most part of a brindled colour, shaggy in coat, with long and sweeping ears. If they have a fault, it is that they are rather too long upon their legs for the bulk, but with a sagacious head and strong instinct, and courage shown in the expression of the eye; generous beasts, capable and willing to do.

"Two hounds followed (the hunters) which were not for hunting, but for dealing with the boar at close quarters—shaggy haired and of a grey colour, much larger than a mastiff, and with his ensanguined eye and hanging jowl, the most powerful beasts I had ever beheld, and very fierce. The hounds were furnished with iron collars with sharp steel spikes, and were formidable as the *betes fauves* they were intended to contend with. For once there was a truce to impertinence in the names they bore! The sounding titles of Hector and Achilles were not bestowed upon a kitten or a poodle.

"At last the horn gave notice that the game was afoot. The sharp cock of my rifle sounded like music in my ears. I heard the game approach; it came thundering along, shaking the hollow and turfy ground more like a bull than a deer, which I expected. It proved instead to be a boar of enormous size, with an eye of fire, churning at the tusks, with mane erect, and rapid but unwieldy gait. He dashed snorting by, and such was my surprise at this first introduction to the grisly beast that I did not fire, and he escaped scot-free."

Again "the hounds gave notice that there was something in the wind. It is a boar! Look to the hounds! See how their eyes kindle and their hair bristles up! a token that it is no trifling enemy. They would not so honour a stag!

"Presently the monster appeared, having outstripped his pursuers. He came along at a leisure trot; the hounds couched close to the earth; he

stopped some sixty paces from us; we were concealed from his view, but he seemed conscious of danger, and as if speculating from what quarter it might come.

We fired simultaneously, and the brute rolled over, rending the earth and tearing the branches in wild and ungovernable fury. The hounds launched upon him like lightning, and pinning him by the throat and muzzle, they rolled over and over together in the death struggle. The boar was soon throttled, and lay upon his back with his muzzle covered with foam, and his eye still scintillating, like a half-extinguished coal."

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ARGUMENT.—The Bard, in compliance with Patrick's request to be informed of the greatest hunt in which the Fenian heroes had ever been engaged, proceeds to inform him that the chiefs assembled one early morn at the celebrated mountain of Slieve-na-man to pursue the chase. He describes their dress and arms; and eulogises Finn as excelling all other heroes in valour and courtesy. The chiefs, having taken their appointed stations, waited till they heard the signal sound that the game was afoot. When they saw the horns of the deer, as they first appeared rising to view over the slope of the hill, they slipped the hounds, and pursued the game with eminent success. The chase of the deer was immediately succeeded by the more dangerous chase of the wild boar, which proved disastrous to the hounds, as ten hundred of them were gored to death by the tusks of the boars, who resolutely maintained their ground till they were attacked and cut down by the weapons of the hunters, who avenged the slaughter of their dogs, and gained a complete, though hardly contested victory. The Lay ends by the Bard's declaring his preference of the music of hounds in chase, to the chanting of psalms and the ringing of Patrick's bells.

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# I.

OSSIAN.—E'er peered the sun from his eastern bower,  
Or beamed on the world in beauty and power,  
Three thousand chiefs of the Fenian race,  
    To arms and battles bred,  
O'er Slieve-na-man pursued the chase,  
    By Finn and Oscar led.

PATRICK.—O Ossian! music tunes thy voice!  
May the soul of Finn in bliss rejoice!  
Now tell me true, when the Fenian clan  
    Pursued that chase severe,  
What numbers fell on Slieve-na-man  
    Of the nimble-footed deer?

Tell what the arms and proud array  
Of all who on that glorious day,  
Went forth with hound and spear.

## II.

OSSIAN.—Then list—to chase the rapid game,  
Each gallant Fenian warrior came  
With two fleet hounds;—a satin vest  
Was buckled o'er his manly breast;  
A coat of polished mail he wore;  
His hand two glittering lances bore;  
His helmet, dazzling to behold,  
Was rich inlaid with gems and gold;  
His shield, of bright and emerald green,  
Had oft in fight victorious been;  
And, by his manly side  
Was hung, a blade of tempered steel,  
That oft had made his foe-men reel,  
And tamed their martial pride.\*

## III.

But who, in princely port and grace,  
Could match the chieftain of our race?  
In vain excursive might you roam  
Where'er is wafted ocean's foam,  
With keen and searching eye to find  
A chief like Finn—so brave—so kind.

\* In "the Historic Tale of the death of the children of Usnach," the dress of Naisi is thus described, as literally translated from the Irish in the "Transactions of the Gaelic Society," p. 175, Dub. 1808:—

"Splendid was his vesture fair,  
Among the mighty of Alba's host;  
A cassock of bright purple, rightly shaped,  
With its fringe of brilliant gold.  
A garb of satin,—precious ornament,  
Wherein were an hundred polished gems;  
For whose fair fitting, brightly shone,  
Fifty hooks of silver.  
A sword of golden hilt graced his hand,  
Two blue-green javelins of brightful point;  
A dirk with ospreys of golden gleam,  
And a hilt of silver on it."



## IV.

Soon westward to the mountain named  
Of Erin's maids for beauty famed,  
We turned with rapid pace;  
There Almhuin's chief had found delight,  
When summer days were long and bright,  
Full oft to urge the chase.  
To a verdant mound we came, that stood  
O'er a dingle coped with a leafy wood.  
Where many a bird of sweetest song  
Was heard the verdant bowers among,  
And the cuckoo's love-inviting voice,  
From cliff and tree, bade the world rejoice.

## V.

There Finn, with Brann, his station took,  
And cast around his watchful look,  
Till bursting on his ear,  
Rose the hunter's cry—and far beneath  
From furzy copse and purple heath  
Sprang the boars and the startled deer.

## VI.

Each chieftain at his post, with glee  
Heard rustling sounds from brake and tree;  
Nor moved—till on the mountain side  
The antlers of the deer they spied;  
Uprising like a fleet's dense masts  
When tilting o'er the flood;  
Or branches by rough wintry blasts  
Left naked in the wood.  
With loud and cheering sounds,  
Upon the antlered throng  
We slipt the eager hounds,  
Three thousand fleet and strong.  
High-bounding, panting to pursue,  
Tempestuous on the game they flew.

## VII.

Oh ! 'twas a grand and glorious sight !  
It thrilled the soul with sweet delight  
That host of fleet-foot hounds to see,  
When from their leashes loosed and free.  
Urged to the chase by many a cheer,  
They sprang to reach the flying deer ;  
While, all in groups, our merry men,  
From copse and wood, from hill and glen,  
Upraised a shout, that, spreading far,  
Proclaimed, begun the sylvan war.  
Such pack of hunting-dogs, I ween,  
Was ne'er before in Erin seen ;  
So full of life, so sweet of tongue,  
As bounding rapid on they sprung,  
And forth in concert broke.

Then loud, and loud, and louder still,  
From mural rock and cairn-crowned hill,  
From wooded isle, from stream, and lake,  
From hollow glen and mountain brake,  
Echo to echo spoke.

## VIII.

As numerous as the birds that fly  
The freezing blasts of a wintry sky ;  
And with their sounding pinions sweep  
The bosom of the azure deep,  
And round the shores, in creek and bay,  
Crowd flocks on flocks in dense array ;  
The deer, in scattering thousands, ran  
Along the slopes of Slieve-na-man.

As fleet the hounds pursued,  
Till each had made a noble prey ;  
Till two fat deer beside him lay  
In smoking blood imbrued.

## IX.

That hunting o'er—another chase—  
 'Twas on the wild boar's savage race—  
 We soon began, prepared to brave,  
 With dart, and spear, and slaughtering glaive,  
 The fierce indomitable rage,  
 That dared our gallant chiefs engage.  
 Soon many a strong and nimble hound  
 Lay maimed and weltering on the ground,  
     With his gorge of shining gold,  
 All torn, and gashed, and steeped in gore,  
 By cruel tusk of rabid boar;  
 And, ere the noon of day was past,  
 Ten hundred hounds had chased their last.  
 But we, with rage of vengeance flushed,  
 Upon the boars impetuous rushed,  
     Though hungry, gaunt, and bold.

## X.

Baited by dogs, the porcine brood,  
 Close gathered in a circle, stood  
 Like warriors that await the charge  
 Of coming foes with spear and targe.  
 Their post the strongest took in front  
 To bear the conflict's fiercest brunt,  
     Like chiefs in battle line.  
 The weaker in the centre, all,  
 Whene'er they heard their leaders' call,  
     Prepared the fight to join.  
 Their wrath they stirred by mutual cries;  
 Glared, sunk in blood and fire, their eyes,\*

\* *Ardentesque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni.*

*VIRG., Æn. II.*

*Sanguine et igne micant oculi, rigit horrida cervix  
 Et setæ densis similes hastilibus horrent.  
 Fervida cum raucos latos stridore per armos  
 Spuma fuit: dentes æquantur dentibus Indis;  
 Fulmen ab ore venit: frondes afflatibus ardent.*

*OID, Lib. VIII.*

And while their savage fury burned,  
 The boiling foam in their jaws they churned.  
 As still more near we onward prest,  
     More furious grew their look;  
 On each ridged back, like warrior's crest,\*  
     Their stiffening bristles shook.  
 Their long white tusks projecting far,  
 Like scythes of warrior's battle-car,  
 Or, like the plough's deep-furrowing share  
 In grassy glebe, can cut and tear  
 Whate'er it strikes—or rend and gash,  
 Like cloud-borne thunder's angry flash—

The hunters scoured the thickets; foremost ran  
 The questing hounds, behind them came the youths,  
 Sons of Antolycus, with whom advanced  
 The illustrious prince Ulysses, pressing close  
 The hounds, and brandishing his massy spear.  
 There hid, in thickest shades, a huge boar lay.

Hunters and dogs approaching him, his ear  
 The sound of feet perceived; upridding high  
 His bristly spine and glaring fire, he sprang  
 Forth from the shrubs, and in defiance stood  
 Near and right opposite. Ulysses first  
 Assailed him with his elevated spear,  
 Ardent to wound him; but the boar, his thrust  
 Preventing, galled him first above the knee.  
 Much flesh, obliquely striking him, he tore  
 With his rude tusk, yet reached not to the bone.  
 But him Ulysses piercing in the brawn  
 Of his right shoulder, urged his weapon through.  
 He, screaming, fell, and died."

HOMER'S *Odyssey* XIX., Cowper.

\* OPIAN, the Greek poet, in his *Cynegetics*, Book III., describes the boar thus:—

Horrent on his neck  
 His hair stands bristling like the helmet's crest,  
 With fervid panting oft he gnashes fierce  
 His ivory teeth, and churning loud his foam,  
 Distils it on the ground.  
 This fame reports, that in the boar's white tusks  
 Is lodged a secret and destructive fire:  
 By fact attested thus—whene'er a crowd  
 Of hunters round him pressing with their dogs  
 Of fearless daring, beat him to the ground;  
 Or with long spears in many a bold attack  
 Have triumphed o'er him—if one standing nigh  
 From his own head extract a slender hair,  
 And with it touch the fallen monster's teeth,  
 It curls as if it felt the force of fire.  
 And in the dogs, where'er the wounding tusks  
 Assailed them in the conflict, may be seen  
 On each scorched side the vestiges of flame.



Gashed many a limb :—with many a stroke,  
The spear-shafts into shivers broke ;  
Ground them—and crushed, as they would crush  
The pithless reed or trembling rush.\*  
Had not our hunters, skilled to face  
All perils of the wild-boar chase,  
Been ever nigh, with strength and art,  
With two-winged axe and keen-barbed dart,  
To curb the brindled monsters' pride,  
And turn their onslaught fierce aside ;  
Some chieftains, and their merry men,  
Would ne'er have urged the chase again.

## XI.

Yet pressed we boldly on the foe,  
And the strongest prostrate laid ;  
With thrust, and stab, and slash, and blow,  
A fearful havoc made.  
With dart and spear their sides we gored,  
And sluiced their life-blood with the sword ;  
Till, like a battle-field, the plain  
Was heaped with mountains of the slain.  
But, had our weapons not proved true,  
Nor strong our Fenian clan,  
Might Erin long have cause to rue  
The chase of Slieve-na-man.

## XII.

Sage, thou whose hands delight to hold  
That shepherd crook inlaid with gold,  
And starred with jewels sparkling bright,  
Clear-glowing in the crimson light,  
Thou now hast heard my tale.

\* "He (the boar) grinds the tough red spear,  
As if it were the soft reed or rush of Lego."  
*Gaelic Poem.*

Oh ! how it thrills my soul to hear  
 Of Fenians bold and bounding deer,  
 On the hills of Innisfail !  
 To me more sweet the music swells  
 From hounds in rapid chase,  
 Than chant of psalms and ring of bells,  
 From all thy cleric race.

NOTE.—To the gentle reader who has honoured our boar-excursion thus far with his company, it may not be uninteresting to hear how one of the most renowned of the Fenian heroes, Dermuid O'Duibhne, who was dear to Grainia, as Adonis to Venus, died of wounds inflicted by the bristly hide of a boar which he had slain. The story may be seen in Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities*, and is recorded thus :—

"We climb Golbun of green hills, where the branchy horns of deer are seen in mist, and where lie thick the mossy beds of roes. From echoing rocks we start the boar, the red deadly boar of Golbun. We pursue him with all our dogs ; but he leaves them weltering in blood behind.

"Who, said the king, shall kill the boar of Golbun ; the boar that is red with the blood of heroes ; that has slain so many of our hounds ? His shall be a spear, the gift of a king ; a shield with all its studs ; and the herbs of the secret stream, to heal his wounds.

"Mine, replied Dermid, shall be the gift of the king ; or I fall by the bristly foe, and lose the fame of the song.

"He spoke and flew over the heath in the glare of steel. \* \* The boar flies before him, but not so fast. His path is marked with wreaths of foam.

\* \* See ! they ascend Drimruath : the spear of Dermid almost reaches the foe. It falls heavy on its sides ; it marks them with red streams. But see ! with fury red-glaring in his eye he turns. As it were a bulrush or slender reed of Lego, he grinds the hard tough spear of Dermid.

"With all his terrible might, the chief lifts his spear. The head is lodged in the rough breast of the boar. His sword is in the hero's hand. Its cold point pierces the heart of the foe :—the boar with all his blood and foam, is stretched on earth.

"We rejoiced to see Dermid safe ; we rejoiced all, but Connan. Measure, said that little soul, the boar which thou hast slain. Measure him with thy foot bare, a larger hath not been seen.

"The foot of Dermid slides softly along the grain ; no harm hath the hero suffered.

"Measure, said Connan, the boar against the grain ; and thine, chief of spears, shall be the boon thou wilt ask.

"The soul of Dermid was a stranger to fear ; he obeyed again the voice of Connan. But the bristly back of Golbun's boar, sharp as his arrows, and strong as his spear, pierces with a thousand wounds his feet. His blood dyes the ground ; it flows in wandering rills through the grass. The herbs of the mountain are applied ; but their virtue fails. Dermid falls, like a tall pine, on the heath."

There is a tradition in Ireland, that it was prophesied Dermuid should lose his life by a boar, and that he was invulnerable except in the sole of his foot. Conan knew this, and induced him to make the experiment which proved fatal.

THE LAY  
OF  
THE DEATH OF CARRIL.

~~~~~  
A GAELIC POEM,

FIRST PRINTED, WITH A TRANSLATION VERBATIM INTO ENGLISH, IN THE  
APPENDIX TO THE REPORT OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY,\* pp. 235, 236.

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ARGUMENT.—*Literally copied from Kennedy's MS.*

"The manner by which the death of this famous hero was brought about is very tragical, whose story is related traditionally as follows:—Gaul being the most experienced warrior of all the bands of Fingal, and the only one living of the royal race of Clan Moirne, of whom he held command under the famous flag and special advice of Fingal, and who upon all occasions, and at all solemnities, was honoured and regarded above any man of either clan. Gaul having always occupied the seat next to Fingal, and enjoyed the best and most delicious messes, especially a roast or collop (called *mir-mora*), over and above the wont ratio of all the grand bands, created him in his declining years ill-will and aversion by the ambitious sons of Fingal, in particular Carril. This *mir-mora*, or rather *mircorra*, was a favourite mess of Fingal and Gaul, which was but a choice collop chopped and mixed with marrow and herb seeds. This *mir-mora*, and every other reward conferred upon Gaul, was claimed by Carril, finding himself the bravest and most accomplished champion among the sons of Fingal, seeing Gaul aged and unfit for distant services, disputed his birth (right?) by dint of arms. The invincible Gaul and inveterate Carril entered the lists, and engaged each other in wrestling, whereby they could not decide the cause upon that day, both being equally overcome. The day following they met well clad in armour, furnished with sword and lance (against the persuasion of Fingal), whereby they showed much courage and bravery, and Gaul gave the decisive stroke to Carril, who has been lamented by Fingal for many days. Gaul fled and hid himself in a

\* The Committee of the Highland Society, say of this poem that they have "never seen it any where but in the collection of Kennedy. Though with a simplicity bordering on rudeness, it is extremely striking in the Gaelic, but very difficult to be translated."—*Report*, p. 128.

cave, full of grief and sorrow, not choosing to rely upon the friendship of Fingal till his days of mourning elapsed. The poem opens at their engagement, and ends by Fingal and the bard's lament over Carril's corpse."

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## I.

The feast was spread in Tara's hall,  
Where harp and cruit harmonious rung,  
And wine-cups cheered the festival,  
'Till strife among the Fenians sprung.  
Words of warm wrath two warriors spoke,  
And forth in fierce defiance broke;  
Carril, the chief of noble mien,  
And Gaul, renowned in fight;  
To prove, by wrestling on the green,  
Superior skill and might.

## II.

The ground, beneath their firm-set tread,  
Was pressed as by dense weights of lead;  
And high the panting of each chest,  
The strife of heroes loud confest;  
While round them, in no joyous mood,  
In sad suspense the Fenians stood.

## III.

As keen they strove, with tugs and wheels,  
The turf was ploughed beneath their heels,  
And many a weighty clod and stone  
Updug, and to a distance thrown.  
And neither, at the evening hour,  
Could boast superior skill or power.

## IV.

Next morn again the champions met,  
And each the other firmly grasped;  
Firm planted, foot to foot they set,  
Again in stern embraces clasped



They pulled, and pushed, and twined, and turned,  
 And fiercer still the conflict burned,  
 Till gushed the sweat-foam o'er each breast:—  
 But victory yet was unconfest.\*

## V.

Then each the contest to decide,  
 And soothe, perchance, his wounded pride;  
 Resolved to prove by sword and shield  
 Who best his deadly arms could wield;  
 Brave Carril oft in combats seen,  
 And Gaul of tempered weapons keen.

\* Macpherson describes the wrestling of Fingal and Swaran thus:—

"Each rushes to his hero's grasp: their sinewy arms bend round each other: they turn from side to side, and strain and stretch their large spreading limbs below. But when the pride of their strength arose, they *shook the hills with their heels*. Rocks tumble from their places on high; *the green-headed bushes are overturned*."—See Note to the *Lay of Magnus*, p. 11.

Parts of this description exemplify the turgid and the bathos; and may, possibly, remind the reader of some modern Sapphics in Latin, which, after describing the conflagration that is seen, in prophetic trance, drying up the channels of the mighty deep, melting down the Alps and the Andes, and wrapping the world in devouring flame, complete the catastrophe by saying that the flowers and white lilies also perish—

——— Pereantque flores  
 Lilliaque alba.

In the 23rd Book of the *Iliad*, the reader may see the following description of a wrestling match between Ajax and Ulysses:—

"Scarce did the chief the vigorous strife propose,  
 When tow'r-like Ajax and Ulysses rose.  
 Amid the ring each nervous rival stands,  
 Embracing rigid with implicit hands:  
 Close-locked above, their heads and arms are mixt;  
 Below, their planted feet, at distance fixt:  
 Like two strong rafters which the builder forms  
 Proof to the wintry wind and howling storms,  
 Their tops connected, but at wider space  
 Fixt on the centre stands their solid base.  
 Now to the grasp each manly body bends;  
 The humid sweat from every pore descends;  
 Their bones resound with blows: sides, shoulders, thighs,  
 Swell to each gripe and bloody tumours rise.  
 Nor could Ulysses for his art renowned,  
 O'erturn the strength of Ajax on the ground;  
 Nor could the strength of Ajax overthrow  
 The watchful caution of his artful foe."—*Pope*.

## VI.

Then front to front the warriors drew,  
And fierce and loud the combat grew.  
As met their swords in furious clash,  
Bright glancing like the lightning's flash,  
And sparkling streams of fire,  
The noble Fenians standing near,  
Were sorely grieved their blows to hear,  
And mourned their deadly ire.  
With splintered steel the ground was strewn,  
Their shields to pieces hacked and hewn  
Till breathless, sad the tale to tell—  
Prone to the dust, young Carril fell.  
Carril the beautiful, the kind,  
Of noble port—of generous mind.  
Remorseless, cruel was the blow  
That laid the youthful champion low.

## VII.

“My son! my son! my darling child,  
Beloved, magnanimous and mild!”  
Cried Finn—while anguish wrung his breast,  
And dark his spirit sunk depressed,  
As hides the radiant sun his head,  
By sudden thunder-clouds o’erspread.  
“Sad, sad thy death—a cruel dart  
That deeply wounds thy father’s heart!  
Clenched are thy teeth of whiteness fast,  
Closed are thy eyes in lasting sleep.  
Away thy manly strength has passed,  
As bud and branch when tempests sweep.  
No more advancing to the field,  
My son, our battle’s boast and pride,  
Wilt thou e’er strike the sounding shield,  
Or combat by thy father’s side.

## VIII.

“ Would that some distant stranger’s hand  
Had wrought this mighty wo!  
Or monarch, who the world commands,  
Had struck the fatal blow;  
Soon should his vanquished legions tell  
That I avenged thy fate, full well.

## IX.

“ Blest, graceful Carril! be thy name,  
Illustrious in the songs of fame,  
For triumphs, in far distant lands,  
Achieved by thy victorious hands.  
Of Erin’s warriors none could vie  
With thee, in gentle courtesy.  
The pride wert thou of Tara’s hall,  
Still foremost in the chase,  
In mirth and glee supreme o’er all  
The noble Fenian race!

## X.

“ O would that in some glorious strife  
Of heroes thou hadst lost thy life!  
Youth of the auburn hair!  
Soon would the sons of Cumhail move  
In fields of carnage red, to prove,  
For thee, a vengeance rare.  
But now, in agony of wo,  
They mourn their darling champion low.  
‘ Sad, sad thy fate!’ they well may cry,  
‘ Not in some battle field to lie,  
But thus to fall in single fight!  
For private wrong, not public right,  
To vanish like a cloud of night!’

## XI.

“ For thee will Sora’s maids deplore—  
For thee their grief in tear-showers shed ;  
As mists that drop their watery store  
Upon the cloud-wrapt mountain’s head ;  
And pour upon the passing gale  
Their long, deep, melancholy wail.

## XII.

“ The champion erst so tall, so strong,  
So full of life our chiefs among,  
Now lies devoid of arms and dress,  
Pale, cold, and stark, and motionless,  
Within a dark and narrow cell  
Beneath the sward, for aye, to dwell.  
Alas ! alas ! for such a grief  
What power on earth can give relief !

## XIII.

“ Along the pebbly strand to roam,  
To breast the storm-swept ocean-foam,  
Great was his joy—his joy to cheer,  
With voice melodious sounding far,  
The hounds to chase the full-grown deer,  
And speed the sylvan war.

## XIV.

“ O hero ! cheerful, generous, kind,  
Of open hand, of soul refined,  
Beloved of friends ;—among thy foes,  
Whene’er thy martial spirit rose,  
A torrent from its mountain source  
Down roaring with resistless force.  
But who can all thy virtues tell ?  
Chief of sharp blades, farewell ! farewell ! ”



# THE LAY

## OF THE

### COMBAT OF FUATH AND CONAN.

---

THE fame of that eminent worthy, CONAN MAOL, had extended to the Scottish Highlands—for in Smith's Gaelic Antiquities, in the poem of Manos, we find him sustaining the character which he enjoys in the genuine Irish minstrelsy, though he is treated with marked neglect by Macpherson. When Manos (Magnus the Great) demanded "the combat of heroes, the combat of heroes he shall have, said the boastful Conan. I will bring to my king the head of the chief." But the exploits of the hero must not be told in creeping prose. Let the harp of Innisfail be strung. Let the voice of song be heard. Raise, ye bards, the fame of the valiant Conan.

---

"DOES Manos hero's combat crave?"

The boastful Conan cried,

"A hero's combat he shall have,

I'll tame that monarch's pride.

Me let him meet—he soon shall feel

A sample true of Erin's steel;

His head in triumph will I bring,

A grateful present, to our king."

To match the vaunting Conan's boast,

Came Fuath forth from Lochlin's host,

By Manos sent—for weapon keen

That prince ne'er drew on foe so mean.

But Fuath was vain Conan's peer,

In cunning trick, in gibe and jeer;

Still last to meet in field of strife,

Still first to flee from risk of life.

Of him the tale is told,

That near a stream, by clear moonlight,

He saw a chief of towering height,

In mien and gesture bold,

Who higher still was seen to rear,

Above his crest, a long barbed spear.

On him did Fuath fear to look;

Like trembling aspen leaf he shook;

And, lest such foe should come more nigh,

Resolved with greyhound speed to fly.

He turned, and swiftly off he flew;

As swift he saw the foe pursue.

Till, trying o'er the stream to bound,  
 Trembling, he stumbled to the ground;  
 And with him fell, without a blow,  
 Beneath his arm the dreaded foe.  
 Of such unhop'd-for victory proud,  
 A shout of triumph raised he loud;  
 And thus the chief addressed.  
 "There, gallant hero! prostrate lie;  
 For mercy plead not—thou must die—  
 This steel shall search thy breast."  
 Then, though still trembling and afraid,  
 He raised his tarnished rusty blade,  
 Prepared his fallen foe to slay,  
 As prostrate on the ground he lay—  
 And found that from no foe-man dread,  
 But his own shadow, he had fled!

Such warrior now in Lochlin's cause,  
 His sword against our champion draws:  
 Him Conan saw with growing fear,  
 And trembled as he drew more near;  
 Yet, feigning valour, on he prest,  
 And touched the feather in his crest  
 With outstretched sword—then turned with speed,  
 To see if Finn had marked the deed.  
 While Fuath, swifter than the wind,  
 With trenchant steel comes close behind,  
 And with unsparing vengeance shears,  
 From valiant Conan, both the ears.

With cries that made the welkin ring,  
 Shorn Conan meets the Fenian king,  
 And at his feet, as low he falls,  
 For great revenge imploring calls.  
 "O Finn, here turn thy pitying eye,  
 Behold thy bravest hero die;  
 Avenge my death—and let my tale  
 Draw showers of grief from Innisfail."

NOTE.—It may have been from the circumstance mentioned in these lines that Conan became distinguished by the epithet *maol*, which is generally rendered *bald*; but it also signifies *hornless*, blunt, and, probably, in his case, *earless*. *Fuath* means a scarecrow, spectre, apparition, &c.

# THE LAY

OF THE

## CONFLICT BETWEEN GAUL MACMORNI AND LUGAIDH LAGA,

OTHERWISE ENTITLED

*Laoi an duirn*—THE LAY OF THE FIST.

---

If such contests arose among the leaders of the Greeks as are recorded in the Iliad, we need not be surprised to find similar dissensions among the Fenian heroes. Those in whose bosoms dwells a high sense of honour with a love of glory, are "jealous and quick in quarrel." Old resentments are easily revived, and new causes of offence as easily created. A misplaced or ill-timed word may sting like a wasp, and an unhappy allusion, like a spark of fire falling on combustible matter, soon kindle a devouring flame.

Lugaidh Laga, a principal actor in the following lay, was the brother of Oilioll Olum, king of Munster. According to MacCurtin, he was the chief champion of Ireland, "a foolish man," who had nothing to boast of but great bodily strength, and ferocious courage. In the bloody and decisive battle of Criona, in the county of Meath, he distinguished himself by cutting off the head of the three brothers named Fergus; and previously by slaying Art, the father of king Cormac, at the battle of Mucroimhe, in the county of Galway. Gaul had incurred his vengeance by having killed his brother in the battle of Moylena, and it seems that Lugaidh Laga was eager to embrace the first occasion he could find of showing how deeply he resented that action, though it had occurred only among those incidents allowed by the principles of war to be justifiable.

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ARGUMENT.—A great festival was proclaimed to be held in Tara, to which MacCon, the king, invited his princes and nobles. Among the most illustrious guests was Gaul MacMorni, a chief distinguished as much by the chivalrous graces of courtesy as by his valour in the field. Lugaidh Laga was seated at the festive board near Gaul, whom he accosted with the invidious question, whether he had ever appeared in such a high and honourable assembly before. Gaul replied that he had often spent whole nights in the festive entertainments given by Conn of the hundred battles, and in society not less numerous, nor less elevated in

rank, than that in which he was at present seated. Lugaídh, passionate and resentful, chose to consider this reply as intended to exalt Gaul's former society above the present, whose superiority he asserted. Gaul, irritated by such comparison, answered proudly, by reminding Lugaídh that Conn had been often victorious in battle, and particularly that he had slain the two kings Mogha Neid and Mogha Nuadht. True, replies Lugaídh; but I took ample vengeance for that deed by slaying Art MacCon. Gaul retorted with a bitter sarcasm, saying that he had gallantly fulfilled the vow which he had made, by cutting off the head of a dead peasant, and presenting it to the king as the head of Art MacCon, whom he pretended he had slain in battle. This was too much to be endured; the brawny fist of Lugaídh fell like a sledge on the forehead of Gaul, leaving an indelible mark. Gaul returned the blow with interest, and felled his assailant to the ground. The chiefs spring to their feet, and all is uproar and confusion. Gaul unsheathes his sword and challenges Lugaídh instantly to single combat. The monarch commands peace, and forbids farther hostilities, until the cause be fairly examined and judged by the chiefs. Conan makes a foolish speech, for which he is sternly reprimanded by Oscar, who defies all the powers of Tara ever again to insult or injure MacMorni. Gaul passes over the Shannon with a strong military guard, and in a brief space of time, is restored to his wonted health. Lugaídh's fractures and contusions being of a more severe description, required a longer time to heal, and indeed he never recovered from the effects of the quarrel which he had rashly provoked.

The lay gives a picture of the manners which sometimes prevailed at the royal feasts of Tara, and may remind the reader of the celebrated battle of the Lapithæ and Centaurs.

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# I.

Proud of Mac Con's, our monarch's, call,  
 Away we sped to Tara's hall;  
 And many, the royal smile to share,  
 Were the gallant chiefs assembled there.  
 There was the princely Cormac found,  
 Friend, brother, of our king renowned;  
 With many a Fenian chief of fame,  
 Who might the right and honour claim  
 To sit at Tara's festive board;  
 Distinction purchased by the sword;  
 In ancient as in modern time,  
 Too oft the prize of blood and crime.  
 There, too, from Cruchan's western land,  
 Came one of generous heart and hand;



Of aspect fair, of noble mien,  
Of cheery mind and brow serene,  
    By whom all hearts were won;  
A warrior bold, of skill and power,  
Of arms and courtesy the flower;  
    Great Morni's gallant son.

## II.

With warriors o'er the sparkling bowl,  
    In Tara's hall with pride,  
Sat Luay of impetuous soul,  
    Brave Morni's son beside.  
A chief was he of giant mould,  
    Of brawny limbs and chest;  
A spirit fierce and uncontrolled  
    Was in his looks exprest.  
In broils he found supreme delight—  
Still loved fierce passions to excite;  
    But ne'er was known to bless.  
With strength, his instrument of ill,  
He joyed to batter, bruise, and kill,  
    To plunder and oppress.  
With wounding taunt and rabid joke,  
He strove dire quarrels to provoke,  
As now he sat Mac Morni nigh—  
Gay Breasal and young Fergus by—  
The rash-tongued Luay thus began—  
While indignation round us ran.

## III.

“ Say, mighty Gaul, hast thou e'er been,  
Before, in such assembly seen?  
    To you the sight is rare—  
With princes, nobles, heroes true,  
Such as in Tara now you view,  
    Whom couldst thou e'er compare?”

GAUL—"With many a hero great and good,  
 Who boldly first in conflict stood,  
 And chiefs of princely line;  
 With Conn, renowned in a hundred fights,  
 To pass in revelry the nights,  
 O chief, was often mine—  
 Yea, oft with warriors good and true  
 As now in Tara's halls I view."

LUAY—"Much as your glorious Conn you prize,  
 Great Gaul," thus Luay sternly cries,  
 "Ne'er were his men than ours more brave,  
 On battle field or roaring wave.  
 More numerous are our good steel swords,  
 More numerous far our chiefs and lords.  
 Of a hundred fights I deem but small  
 The glory—to have lost them all!  
 Let BEARNAN EILE's pass\* proclaim  
 The honour of your monarch's name."

With swelling chest and aspect proud,  
 The son of Morni answered loud—  
 "Let not malicious rage and spite  
 The glory of our monarch blight.  
 In foughten fields he won a score  
 Of victories, told ten times o'er,†  
 And bore great spoils away.

\* "Conn understanding how the most part of the other provinces of Ireland, together with the province of Munster, had owned *Eugenius* as their sovereign and deliverer, gathered all his power and came against *Munster* to destroy the same, and bring *Eugenius* under his power. *Eugenius* on the other side gathered all the forces of Munster and came to meet *Conn* at *Bearnan-eile*, now called the *Devil's-Bit*, in the county of Tipperary, where he met *Conn*, and not only there gave him battel, but also broke and defeated him and his army in that, and in nine engagements more, with the slaughter of most part of his men, and loss of his chief commanders; and at last constrained him to come to a division with him about the kingdom."  
 —*MacCurtin*, pp. 100, 101.

† "Conn surnamed of the hundred battels, of the posterity of *Herimon*—fought 100 battels in *Munster*, 100 battels in *Ulster*, and 60 battels in *Lenster*."  
 —*MacCurtin*, p. 98.

"*Mogha Neid* the king of Munster fell in battle against *Conn* of the hundred fights. *Eugenius*, commonly called *Mogha Nuaghath*, i.e. the strong labourer, fell in the battle of *Maighleana* in *Connacht*, after having defeated *Conn* at the *Devil's-Bit*."—*Id.*

By him in battle-field were slain  
Two royal chiefs—the Moghas twain—  
All Erin owned his sway.”

LUAY—“ Thy king, forsooth, in petty strife,  
From Neid and Nuad reft the life,  
A deed avenged full well,  
On mighty Art Mac Conn;  
E’en by this hand that Monarch fell;  
And death awaits his son.  
If e’er in arms I Cairbre meet,  
I’ll stretch him dead beneath my feet.”

GAUL—“ Yes—as you stretched upon the plain  
Great chiefs—that rose and fought again!  
When erst you cross’d the briny way.”  
With scorn Mac Morni said,  
“ You vowed great Art Mac Conn to slay,  
And well your vows you paid,  
When from the trunk of peasant dead  
For Conn’s you bore the severed head.”\*

## IV.

The clenched and brawny hand  
Of Luay, anger-stung,  
Like sledge, or oak-root brand,  
On Gaul’s broad forehead rung.  
The fair smooth polished skin it tore,  
And sluiced th’ astonied hero’s gore.  
Long as this vital air he drew,  
His forehead wore a livid hue.

\* O’Flaherty, in his *Ogygia*, informs us, that Lugad Laga, pursuing Artur after the battle (of Mucrom), stood at a brook in Aidhnia, and attacking him there, tumbled him to the earth, and as he lay almost breathless, cut off his head and brought it to the conqueror.” It seems to have been questioned whether it was really Artur whom Lugad decapitated, and hence the sarcasm of Gaul in the poem. O’Flaherty adds—“ Who gave the fatal blow, or who cut off the head, ought not to admit of the smallest inquiry or controversy. But the brook has got the name of Turloch-airt, in commemoration of this action, which it retains to this very day, being situate between Moyvoela and Kilcornan.”

## V.

While fiercely hot his anger burned,  
 The quick crude onslaught Gaul returned.  
 As loud as falling sea-cliff's note,  
 Stern Luay's bearded cheek he smote,  
     With firm-knit hand and dread;  
 The sounding jaw loud-crackling rung,  
 The teeth from fractured sockets sprung,\*  
     Down Luay sunk as dead;

\* Such was the effect of the blows given to Dares by Entellus—

— duro crepitant sub vulnere malæ.  
 — crassumque cruorem  
 Ore ejectantem mixtosque in sanguine dentes.

Ulysses *punished* Irus thus. The hero

— “rising to the stroke,  
 His jaw-bone dashed; the crashing jaw-bone broke:  
 Down drop'd he stupid from the stunning wound;  
 His feet extended, quiv'ring, beat the ground;  
 His mouth and nostrils spout a purple flood;  
 His teeth all shattered, rush immix'd with blood.”

*Ody.* xviii, 112.

The blow given by Pollux to Amycus was a *finisher*:—

“ Then Pollux with firm steps approaching near,  
 Vindictive struck his adversary's ear;  
 Th' interior bones his ponderous gauntlet broke;  
 Flat fell the chief beneath his dreadful stroke:  
 The Grecians shouted with wild rapture fir'd,  
 And, deeply groaning, Amycus expir'd.”

FAWKES'S *Apol. Rhodius*, Book II.

Though the Irish sometimes indulged themselves in the manly sport of wrestling, it does not appear that pugilism was one of their entertainments. They had not reached such a pitch of *refinement* as to have schools for the *Fancy*, with stated *sets-to* for glory and gold in the pugilistic ring, though, in a more advanced stage of civilization, some Irish worthies have shown as great a fondness for *milling* and being *milled*, as any bruisers for the championship of England. In set fights they prefer the shillela to the fist, and that is an instrument which they can use with surprising dexterity—as, on proper occasions, they can also wield the fist with the force of a battering ram.

In a copy of “The Lay of the Fist,” the effect of the blow given by one of the antagonists is thus described:—

“ He broke the cheek-bone of the hero  
 And shook to the pole his nerves.  
 The five senses he wounded,  
 Within the frame of the hero;  
 From that to the knees, though untouched,  
 The fist bent the brave man.  
 The great-acted fist went clearly  
 Unto the wrist of the arm into the ground.”



And as he rattled to the ground,  
His crashing ribs gave a hollow sound.

## VI.

Then all th' assembled warriors rose,  
Tumultuous raged the storm of blows;  
Unsheathed were skeans, fair features marred,  
And limbs with wounds all gashed and scarred;  
Distained were Tara's walls with gore  
And warriors fell—to rise no more.  
Some to their arms impatient flew,  
And as the conflict fiercer grew,  
Gaul grasped his bossy shield.  
O'er Luay swiftly while he bared  
His good sharp sword, he boldly dared  
The hero to the field.

## VII.

Scarce could our men of might control  
The maddening rage of Luay's soul,  
Impatient as he chafed, and cried,  
The strife that instant to decide.  
But sage Mac Con of counsel wise,  
Bade all the tumult cease;  
And hoped, perchance, by friendly ties,  
To bind the foes in peace.  
“Our court,” he said, “by equal laws  
Shall hear, and justly judge the cause;  
But let not Conan, bold and rude,  
His judgment on our minds intrude.”

Gaul struck another fist  
On the son of Eugene in a hurry,  
And broke five teeth in his head,  
And five ribs in his very stout body.”

Who has not read or heard of the single mortal and immortal stroke  
of an Irish knight's battle-axe, that severed from the body the mailed thigh  
of an armed equestrian warrior? *Fag an beleach!*

## VIII.

Then Conan cried—"Sweet friends, should I  
This new and wondrous law-suit try,  
No man in Leinster's realm, I swear,  
His head should on his shoulders wear.  
Nor son of Munster, from the pond  
Of Inverdevlin to the bay  
Of Monia, and its shores beyond,  
E'en to the warrior's broad high-way,  
But all should die—and ne'er, I vow,  
Should by Leigh Con the boast be made,  
That on our gallant Illan's\* brow  
Momonian hand was rudely laid."  
Such speech young Oscar's patience tried,  
And thus in flaming ire he cried;  
"A speech so vile thou soon shouldst rue,  
Bald Conan, prone to ill;  
Should I thee pay requital due—  
Thy heart's blood I would spill.  
Yes—locked in sleep on the heathy field,  
Beneath my warrior spear and shield,  
Should I repose, thou boaster vain,  
If thy dull head, with folly drunk,  
I smote not from thy craven trunk,  
Though all the monarch's train,  
Momonian's pride, Lagenia's boast,  
All marshalled in one mighty host  
Before me stood, and all their might,  
Were in a point condensed for fight,  
And bent on me alone.  
Hence, if thou canst, just vengeance flee;  
I stoop not now to wretch like thee:  
But here to Tara's throne,  
And all its clans of wide-spread fame,  
Defiance fearless I proclaim;  
MacMorni's head again to scar,  
By treacherous blow or open war,

\* Illan—a name of Gaul.

Till safe with pride again he stand  
In Cruchan of the western land.”\*

## IX.

O'er Shannon's broad majestic tide,  
To the leache's and the sick-man's hall;  
Great Gaul passed westward, there to bide  
Till time should health recal.  
Five hundred spears in dense array  
Of Morni's clans secured his way,  
And ere the moon twice filled her round,  
His wonted strength the hero found.

## X.

To the house of the sick by Cathair's wave,†  
The health-bestower's aid to crave—  
For pangs his vitals tore—

\* Cruachan, now Croghan, a fair town in the county of Roscommon, province of Connaught. This was a royal residence of the ancient capital of that province, founded, as we learn from Keating, by Eochaidh, monarch of Ireland, prior to the commencement of the Christian era, with the view of confirming his authority in that part of his dominion. Having consulted the Druids, as was customary on all important occasions, they agreed that *Druim-na-Druidh*, which had long been celebrated for its cave and its mysteries, should be selected as the site of the intended edifice. The plan was drawn by the most eminent architects, and the work prosecuted with such expedition, that the ditch, which was very large and surrounded the whole pile, was finished in the space of one day. The palace, when completed, was named *Rath Eochaidh*. Meev, his queen, on the death of her husband, bestowed it on her mother, who was named *Cruachan Crodhearg*, and thence it obtained the name of *Rath Cruachan*, which name, says our venerable authority, it retains to this day. Seward, in his *Topographia Hibernica*, Dub. 1795, states that the only remains of the ancient city are “the celebrated Rath, the *Naasteaghan*, where the states of Connaught assembled, and the sacred cave. Near *Croghan* stands *Relig-na-Riagh*, or the resting place of the kings. \* \* It consists of a circular area of about 200 feet in diameter, surrounded with a stone ditch greatly defaced. The body of Dathias, the last of the heathen kings, was brought from the Alps, where he fell by the stroke of a thunderbolt, and was interred here, A.D. 429.

† The Fenians, as well as the warriors of Homer, could boast of chiefs like Podalirius and Machaon, of whom the muse might affirm that

“To these his skill their parent-god imparts,  
Divine professors of the healing arts.”

Finn himself was well skilled in the arts of surgery and medicine.

O'Halloran informs us that Connor, king of Ulster, when pursuing the Conacians, “received a violent fracture on the skull by a ball, darted from

Strong Luay went; and many a day  
 Beneath the leache's hand he lay,  
     Yea, thrice six moons and more.  
 Nor till the hour he breathed his last,  
 Away his cruel pangs had past.

a Cran-Tubal, or sling, and of which wound he recovered by the operation of the trepan, performed by his chief surgeon, Fighnin, called Feathach, or the Skilful. This, he continues, is not the only testimony our history bears, of the eminence of our ancient physicians and surgeons. In the bloody battle of Criona, fought in the beginning of the third century, Teige, the son of Cein, the son of Oilkoll, of the house of Heber, being deeply wounded, and the barbs of some spears lodged in different parts of his body, producing exquisite pain, he sent to Munster for the celebrated surgeon Finighn, called Feath-glic, or the Learned and Dextrous, who with his three Daltadh, or elevés, soon relieved him by removing these extraneous bodies. It appears that physic, like the other learned professions, was hereditary in families; and that the most celebrated of this body attended the army. So much superior in knowledge to the rest of their brethren were these military surgeons deemed, that to this day, to express an incurable, we say, *Ní thogfíodh leagha na bhíonn, e!* The physicians of the royal militia could not raise him.'—O'Halloran's History of Ireland, 4to, vol. I., p. 188.

One of the three principal edifices in Ulster was "The Royal Hospital of Broinbhearg, which signifies the house of sorrow and affliction; for here the sick and wounded were provided for and supported till they were perfectly cured."—Keating, I., 218.



# THE LAY

OF

## BEANN GULBAN.

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THE mountain of Beann Gulban (corrupted to Ben Bulbin), from which the following Lay takes its title, is situated near the town of Sligo, the City of Shells, in the county of the same name. It forms one of those lofty and commanding elevations on which the Fenians were wont to assemble, and in which the lovers of mountain scenery delight. In the survey of that county, we are told that the traveller from Ballyshannon to Sligo by the sea coast, sees "the beautiful mountains of Ben Bulbin" rising before him to a lofty height, and looking, "in every variety of figure and aspect, though in the end of October, green as a new billiard table."

Miss Owenson (Lady Morgan), in her "Patriotic Sketches," W. Bennet, in his "Six Weeks' Tour," and the "Angler in Ireland," speak of Ben Bulbin and its magnificent scenery in terms of high admiration. Inglis also expatiates on the rich and varied picturesque beauties of the prospect from the "Cairns" which top the hill; and the enchanting views round Loch Gilly; but none expresses his feelings of delight more warmly than an accomplished tourist, whose familiarity with the lakes and mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland, stamps superior value on his judgment, and peculiarly qualifies him to speak of the beauties and sublimities of nature. Mr. Curwen, describing a scene in which Ben Bulbin is particularly conspicuous, says, "The declining rays of the sun, irradiating the surface of the sea, presented to our view an extensive sheet of burnished gold; and, in reflecting its warm and glowing tints over the nearer objects, completed the magic of a scene which would have kindled enthusiasm and rapture in the coldest and most insensible individual. The first sensation with which I became affected was astonishment—this was succeeded by the inspiration of unbounded admiration! The effects of both can never be effaced from my recollection. Reluctantly did I bid this delightful prospect farewell; and nothing but the rapid approach of night could have compelled us to quit a scene of such novelty and fascination."

Again, when speaking of the "highly picturesque beauty" of Hazlewood and the "beautiful islands of Lough Gilly," he adds—"Impressive, however as are the several views of the lake, the magnificence of Benbulb made stronger impressions of admiration on my mind. The singular grandeur

of so stupendous a mountain, springing upright and majestically from an humble plain, in the midst of a valley highly cultivated and tolerably well wooded, was like nothing I had seen before, and most probably shall never again behold."—Observations on the State of Ireland, &c., by J. C. Curwen, Esq., M.P., Lond. 1818.

The *Penny Cyclopædia*,<sup>1</sup> article Sligo, says that "Knock-na-righ (the king's hill) is 1,057 feet high, and Ben Bulbin, one of the loftiest of the group, rises to the height of 1,722 feet. The northern face of this mountain is nearly perpendicular, while on the south side, a more gradual slope leads to the summit, which is a table-land of some extent."

The "GOLBUN of Green-hills," mentioned in Smith's Erse legend of Dermid, p. 132, is no other, it is presumed, than our Irish BEANN GULBAN.

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ARGUMENT.—In an address to Patrick in the opening of this poem, is a description of rural scenes and occupations, which once afforded no small delight to the bard—the remembrance of which fills him, in his forlorn old age, with melancholy. He then proceeds to relate that, in days gone by, when the Fenians were pursuing their various sports on the hill, Conan and MacLuay were engaged in the game of chess, and the chiefs standing by, in silence, watching the progress of the game, when they were startled by the sudden sound of a blow inflicted on the ear of Conan by the iron fist of his antagonist. Conan immediately sprang up to seize his arms, and ceased not from his rage till he was bound. Little Hugh, indignant at the insult offered to his friend, told Mac Luagh that he should repent it; and Mac Luagh, in consequence of being under a vow, refuses to give "satisfaction." The chiefs espouse different sides, and a general conflict ensues; the progress of which is interrupted by the appearance of a gigantic warrior bearing in his hand a harp, at the sound of which their swords drop harmless to the ground. Conan interrogates the giant, asking his name and country. The giant boldly replies, and then, by the sound of his magical harp, throws the whole Fenian host into a profound sleep (mesmeric?) from which they awoke after the lapse of a moon, and resolved to march in battle array to the cold regions from which the giant had come. They meet the giant advancing and glaring on them, like a Cyclops, with his solitary eye. Little Hugh and the other warriors make a gallant charge. Oscar acts nobly; but Gaul, the hero of the field, when the Fenians are nearly vanquished, has recourse to his harp, and, by its magical power, surrounds them with a sudden darkness, which saves them from the foe. At last they obtain a complete victory, and quit the field without the loss of a single man.

NOTE.—The only copy which the author has seen of this Lay was lent to him by Mr Hardiman, accompanied by a verbal translation into English. The original was taken, as Mr. Hardiman informs us, "from the recital of a mountain shepherd, at Partry, in the county of Mayo. Metrical fragments, to the number of several thousand verses, had been committed to memory by the reciter in his early youth, amidst his native hills, where they have been transmitted from sire to son, through countless generations."—*Irish Minstrelsy*, II., p. 385.

## I.

OSSIAN—Beann Gulban, thou art sad to-day,  
Thou that wast erst of aspect gay,  
And lovely to be seen ;  
O son of Calfruin, then 'twas sweet  
To find a soft and mossy seat  
On its lofty summit green ;  
To see the rapid huntsmen spring,  
To hear the mountain echoes ring.

## II.

Thou hill of battles, stained with gore,  
How oft thy fortress strong around,  
Where dwelt a hero bold of yore,  
Rose music sweet of horn and hound !  
The bittern round thee boomed at night,  
The grouse, loud-whirring in her flight,  
Peopled thy heath, and every tree  
Rang with the small birds' melody.

## III.

Yes—'twas delight to hear the cry  
Of hounds along the valley sweep ;  
To hear the rock's wild son\* reply  
From every cliff and steep ;  
To see the chiefs of the Fenian band,  
To slip the greyhounds, ready stand ;  
And groups of maidens young and fair,  
That plucked, as they went, the flowrets rare,  
And berries of every form and hue,  
Of crimson blush or of glossy blue,  
From bramble and bush, and cresses young,  
That by the crystal streamlets sprung.  
And passing sweet was the voice of their song,  
As the fair-haired damsels roved along.

\* Mac Alla, the son of the rock, i. e. echo.

## IV.

Sweet, too, by source of lonely stream,  
To see aloof the eagle sail ;  
To hear her solitary scream  
Burst startling o'er the vale.  
To hear the otter's whining note ;  
Or, mid the hollow mountain rocks,  
The barking of the wary fox ;  
Or mellow song of blackbird float  
From bower and grove, o'er wood and lawn,  
To evening hour from early dawn.

## V.

With joy it thrilled my heart, I vow,  
To sit upon that mountain's brow,  
And all the glorious landscape view ;  
The seven brave Fenian bands around,  
In war, in peace, still faithful found ;  
But now my friends are few.  
Then many and gay, in the summer ray,  
They frolicked and they shone ;  
With autumn's blast away they past ;  
And I am left alone.  
My fate with tears may dim your eye,  
And wake your tender sympathy.

## VI.

As on that hill we Fenians lay,  
And passed in various sports the day,  
Conan and Luay's son of shame,\*  
Of chess pursued the earnest game ;  
The source of bitter wo !  
When all the chiefs in silence round,  
Were startled by the sudden sound  
Of a dire and wrathful blow,

\* This Mac Luay was the incestuous offspring of one of Finn's sons.



That on the ear of Conan rung  
Loud as the sledge on anvil flung;  
Struck by a hand of iron mould,  
By Luay's son, the rash, the bold.

## VII.

By sudden fury stung,  
To arms swift Conan sprung,  
Nor ceased his ire till fast we bound  
A binding chain his limbs around.  
Uprose in haste the little Hugh,  
In frame a child—a man in heart,\*  
And cried—"That insult thou shalt rue,  
O Luay's son, though strong thou art."  
But, struck with fear, Mac Luay said,  
That a sacred vow on his soul was laid—  
The coward's plea, to hide his shame  
Beneath the gloss of a specious name.  
Not high can I the warrior prize,  
Who fears in honour's cause to fight;  
Who from a present danger flies,  
Yet dares to wrong, insult, and smite,  
To crush the fallen still more low,  
But grapple with no equal foe.  
When little Hugh let forth his rage,  
Confusion paled Mac Luay's brow,  
He blenched—and by this hand, O sage,  
He ne'er fulfilled his vow.

## VIII.

But Davar's son—sad cause of grief!  
Arose in haste to his friend's relief—  
From Hugh's fierce ire to save.  
And quickly crouding o'er the ground,  
Forth from the well-armed ranks around,  
Came many a warrior brave.

\* Like Homer's Tydeus, "Whose little body lodged a mighty mind."

For Morni's tribe they boldly stood,  
And Garraý soon, in battle good,  
With Gaul of many a warlike deed,  
Were thinning down the ranks with speed.

## IX.

Of Duane's tribe, against the foes  
Of little Hugh, ten hundred rose;  
When I, with Caoilte by my side,  
The green-topped standard raised,  
And Boisgne's clan in bannered pride,  
And marshalled order blazed.  
Then quick advancing o'er the fields,  
We raised a thousand crimson shields—  
But Oh! it grieves my soul to tell  
What numbers of the Fenians fell.

## X.

While yet the conflict raged, behold!  
A warrior of gigantic mould,  
Advancing from the East we view;—  
A horror strange he round us threw;  
With hellish incantations armed,  
Away our manly strength he charmed,  
That none might longer stand;  
Of coal-black dye were his youthful cheeks,  
His teeth like snow-clad mountain-peaks;  
And in his brawny hand  
He bore a harp, at whose dread sound  
Our swords dropped harmless to the ground.

## XI.

Then senseless Conan thus began:  
"Giant! I lay thee under bann  
Of strong enchantment, with your harp  
That sounds so fiercely loud and sharp,

Unless you quickly tell your name,  
And what the country whence you came."  
"My name, O chief, I'll ne'er deny—  
The bold Garv-Glunach's son am I,  
And giant Sturrave hight;  
From cold and icy realms afar,  
That lie beneath the Northern star,  
I come to prove your might;  
Though strong your arms, and proud your boast,  
I hurl defiance at your host."

## XII.

Then from the harp's rude-clashing wire,  
He brought such soul-appalling sound,  
That all were ready to expire—  
And sunk in trance profound.  
Unnerved and void of sense we lay,  
Until a moon had rolled away.  
Us, of our arms the giant reft—  
Nor sword, nor spear, nor buckler left.

## XIII.

At length the Clanna Boisgne woke,  
And clad in arms once more;  
That Sturrave soon should feel their stroke,  
Linked hand in hand, they swore.  
Again we marshalled well our powers,  
And forward to Dunmana's towers,  
We marched in pomp of war;  
In crouds the great, the lowly, came  
To see great Gaul and Finn of fame  
From regions round afar;  
And soon at Almhuin's palace stood  
A numerous host of warriors good:  
The royal standard high was raised,  
And bright in arms our warriors blazed.

## XIV.

Straight to the dreary realms of cold,  
 We passed in firm array.  
 Alas! that e'er so rashly bold,  
 We thither bent our way!  
 That e'er we touched strong Ludar's shore,  
 Or saw the land of Eachair More!

## XV.

There came against the Fenians true,  
 A band of gallant men,  
 Whom stout Treitleathan with him drew  
 From Uvar's woody glen;  
 With Truitrean first in battle shock,  
 And Croma of the mountain rock.  
 Advancing quick with giant stride  
 The huge Garv-Glunach\* soon we spy,  
 Clothed in a wild beast's shaggy hide,†  
 And glaring with the horrid eye  
 That in his forehead's centre shone  
 Dismaying all it looked upon.

## XVI.

But little Hugh, whose mighty heart  
 No fear could e'er appal,  
 Cries out "Garv-Glunach! e'er we part,  
 One of us two must fall"—

\* *Garv-Glunach*, i. e. the fierce valiant man.

† *Horridus in jaculis et pelle Lybistidis ursæ.*  
 VIRG.

Of a rough Lybian bear the spoils he wore,  
 And either hand a pointed jav'lin bore.  
 DRYDEN.

— lumen  
*Ingens quod torva solum sub fronte latebat,  
 Argolici clipei aut Phœbeæ lampadis instar.*  
 VIRG.

His eye that midst his frowning forehead shone  
 Like some broad buckler, or the blazing sun.  
 PITT.



And Singean, Morni's gallant boy,  
And Conan who in strife found joy,  
Said, "Be it ours his sons to stay,  
And try our broad-swords how they play."

## XVII.

But ere they met, before the rest,  
Had rash Mac Luay onward prest,  
And singly braved to desperate fight  
Both Ludar's and the giant's might.—  
When such unequal strife we try,  
Alas! what chance of victory!

## XVIII.

Said Aimhlin's tribe—"With rush of war  
We'll stay the clan of Macoivar;  
And with our keen and trenchant steel,  
We'll cleave them down from head to heel."  
"That task," cried Oscar bold, "be mine  
And with my single spear,  
Before the ruddy morning shine,  
I'll stay the wild career  
Of fierce Treitlethan with the men  
He brings from Uvar's woody glen."

## XIX.

With Croma of the mountain rock,  
Great Gaul now rushed to battle shock,  
Gaul of the harps renowned;  
Behind his broad and bossy shield,  
And arm that never knew to yield,  
We to the conflict bound—  
Now foot to foot the Fenians close  
In combat with their giant foes,  
And ere the morning dawned in heaven,  
'Twere hard to tell what blows were given,  
What shields were cleft, what helmets riven.

## XX.

Soon by his red and conquering blade  
     Great Gaul rough Croma slew ;  
 Behind his shield's protecting shade  
     Who fought—no danger knew.  
 Whoe'er of all the Fenian band,  
 In peril stood from dart or brand,  
 Before him, in the point of need,  
     With lifted shield and spear  
 Rushed swift-foot Gaul with greyhound's speed,  
     And saved his soul from fear.  
 To Morni's tribe his aid he brings,  
     And bounds the foe to meet,  
 More swift than hungry weasel springs,  
     On timid cony fleet—  
 More swift o'er Boisgne's clan to cast  
 His shield, than speeds the vernal blast.

## XXI.

When sore oppressed by giant might,  
 Our warriors scarce maintained the fight,  
 With well-strung harp of magic power  
 And dulcet tone—in our evil hour,  
 He came, and by its potent spell  
 A sudden darkness round us fell,  
     To guard us from the foe.\*  
 Though numerous were their sons and brave,  
 We left, by many a bloody grave,  
     Their widows sunk in wo.

\* At Venus obscuro gradientes ære sepsit,  
 Et multo nebulae circum dea fudit amictu,  
 Cernere ne quis cos, neu quis contingere posset.

VIRG.

They march obscure, for Venus kindly shrouds  
 With mists, their persons, and involves, in clouds ;  
 That, thus unseen, their passage none might stay,  
 Or force to tell the causes of their way.

DRYDEN.

With lucky stars to Erin's shore,  
 Their arms in triumph off we bore;  
 Nor in such feat,—of all our train  
 Mourned we a warrior lost or slain.

NOTE.—Whether this Lay has any allusion to some historical event, the writer has not ascertained. It may have been intended to show that as no foreign invaders could overcome the warriors of Erin in fair battle, neither could all the powers of enchantment, while they had such champions as Oscar and Gaul. The early history of Ireland abounds in marvellous feats achieved by the influence of magic. The Tuatha de Danans, in exercise of this art, could be matched only by the notorious Thessalian enchantress, Erichtho, by whom we might suppose they had been instructed, particularly in the means of reanimating the dead—

si tollere totas  
 Tentasset campis acies, et reddere bello:  
 Cessissent leges Erebi, monstroque potenti  
 Extractus Stygio populus pugnasset Averno.

LUCAN, *Lib. VI.*, 633—636.

“At whose strong bidding (such is her command)  
 Armies at once had left the Stygian strand;  
 Hell's multitudes had waited on her charms,  
 And legions of the dead had risen to arms.”

ROWE'S *Lucan*.

——“The Tuatha de Danans,  
 By force of potent spells and wicked magic,  
 And conjurations horrible to hear,  
 Could set the ministers of hell at work,  
 And raise a slaughtered army from the earth,  
 And make them live, and breathe, and fight again.  
 Few could their arts withstand or charms unbind.”

In Keating's History of Ireland, from which these lines are extracted, we are told that when the Tuatha de Danans, came to the coast of Ireland, “they had recourse to their enchantments, to screen them from the observation of the inhabitants; and accordingly by their magic skill, they formed a mist about them for three days and three nights, and marched through the country without being discovered by the Firbolgs till they came to a place called Sliabh an Jaruin,” whence they sent a message to the Firbolgs to meet them in battle, or deliver up the kingdom. In the ensuing battle, the Firbolgs, unable to withstand the enchantments of the Tuatha de Danans, were discomfited, with the loss of ten thousand men, “or, as historians with more probability, inform us, of a hundred thousand, on the spot.”

“So expert were they in the black art, and the mystery of charms and enchantments, that the inhabitants of the country where they lived, distinguished them by the name of gods.”

“*Tuatha De.*—The people of Gods, or the people of (*i. e.* dear and sacred to) the Gods. When the Druidic college could no longer maintain in Britain its vast power and mysterious rites, it removed them to Erin, their only sure asylum. They obtained superiority in that island more by their treasures, arts, and learning, and the engines of religious awe, and as gods or divine men, a tribe *sacer interpretsque Deorum*, than as men by arms and numbers. At this date the druidical magic was systematically organized in Ireland. They have been called *Danann*, either falsely from the more modern Dani, or ancient Danai: but rather from *dan*, art, poem, song (see

Keating, p. 48, O Connor's ed.), which derivation, if it do not express the Druids, sufficiently expresses the Bards."

"The time of the removal of the hierarchy was after the unsuccessful wars of Cynobeline's sons against the Romans, of which events the capture of Caractacus, in A.D. 50, was the cardinal point."—The Irish version of the *Historia Britonum* of Nennius, additional Notes, p. c.



THE LAY  
OF  
THE CATTLE-PREY OF TARA,  
OR THE  
QUARREL BETWEEN CORMAC, THE MONARCH, AND  
FINN AND THE FENIANS, AT AN ENTERTAINMENT  
GIVEN BY HIM AT TARA.

THE POEM IS ADDRESSED BY OSSIAN TO CAOILTE.

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DUAN FIRST.  
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ARGUMENT.—The Lay opens with an address of Ossian to Caoilte Mac Ronain, the foster son and favourite of Finn, asking him if he remembers the day when they last met in Tara's hall, at a banquet given by the monarch. He then proceeds to show how the quarrel between Cormac and Finn originated. The former, in consequence of past grudges and contentions with Finn, desires him to withdraw altogether from his court. Finn indignantly replies—speaks of his past achievements—justifies his conduct in exacting the tribute which he holds to be due to him by right of conquest—and declares that he will not abandon his claims though opposed by all the forces with which Cormac can oppose him. Gaul, supposing that Finn's speech contained reflections on the valorous conduct of those by whom Cumhall, the father of Finn, was slain, vindicates their courage, and affirms that none of the Clanna Boisgne dared to meet Conn in battle. Finn desires Garray to give them a faithful account of the manner in which Cumhall fell in the field of Cneuca. Garray complies by stating that he fell after many gallant achievements, fighting boldly, when surrounded by enemies. Finn replies in terms laudatory of Garray's generosity in giving ample praise to Cumhall, though his enemy; and adds that Garray has reason to rejoice that he and his allies had gained the battle of Cneuca; but that if Finn and the Fenians had been present, the result would have been different. Garray rejoins, that if Finn had been present, he would have met the same fate as Cumhall, his father, for whose death he had obtained ample vengeance. Finn retorts, that he would not deem the

death even of Gaul any compensation for the loss of Cumhall ; and that his vengeance would not be appeased till he had met and cut down all the forces which Garray could bring into the field. The monarch then proposes that, to put an end to the contest, it should be decided by the spear. Osgar immediately falls in with this proposal, and challenges the bravest of Finn's enemies to meet him in single combat. Cairbre accepts the challenge, and the combat seemed to be about to commence, when Ossian, with a view to restore harmony, desires the principal bard to record, with harp and song, some tale of their ancestors ; and by his compliance, a temporary cessation of mutual provocations is effected, and the company retire to rest for the night.

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I.

OSSIAN.—Dost thou remember, Caoilte kind,  
 Of open hand and generous mind,  
 When to proud Tara's well-fenced towers  
 We led, of yore, the Fenian powers ?  
 The youngest of the clans were we,  
 Then full of mirth and festive glee,  
     Though now in grief we pine.  
 At royal Cormac's splendid board,\*  
 With viands rich and goblets stored,  
     We quaffed the rosy wine.  
 Yes, son of Croncur, Ronan's son,  
 Of the gay revellers thou wast one,  
 The chief of all thy tribe, I vow—  
 What then befel I tell thee now.

\* The Irish bards and romance writers expatiate with delight on the splendour and magnificence of the royal feasts of Tara. O'Halloran informs us that "on the side-board of Cormac, on public festivals, were displayed 150 cups of massy gold and silver ; 150 of the Clanna-Morni, or Connaught knights, constantly attended on his person ; and 1,050 soldiers mounted guard every day on all the approaches to the palace—which were five—to point out to the public with greater dignity where the monarch resided. Besides his state bed, were 150 beds in the apartments of the palace *only*, to lodge such as were in immediate attendance. An open table was constantly kept for 1,500 persons ; and he regulated the great officers of his court, and determined their number, which was invariably continued to the dissolution of the monarchy in the twelfth century."—Vol. I., page 260. The curious reader may see another description of the palace of Tara in the third volume of Vallancey's Collectanea. It states that it "contained 1,000 guests daily, besides princes, orators, and men of science ; engravers of gold and silver, carvers, modellers, and nobles. The quantities of meat and butter that were daily consumed surpass all description. There were 27 kitchens, and 9 cisterns for washing hands and feet—a ceremony never dispensed with from the highest to the lowest."

## II.

When wine had flushed the monarch's heart,  
Great Cormac, son of princely Art,  
The son of Conn, whom fame delights  
To name the chief of a hundred fights,  
Sought olden quarrels to renew ;

And said to Finn, my sire—

“ Finn ! here no longer meet our view,

But from our court retire.

Such is our sentence on thy crimes,  
And violent deeds, in bygone times.”

Finn thus replied—“ Great Cormac, I

In every strife won victory,

Though brave and potent were the foes,

That clad in arms against me rose ;

And justly was the tribute due

That from the vanquished clans I drew.

With ten battalions strong and bold—

The tale, though shameful, must be told—

To crush great Cumhall, when you came

With Meath's illustrious sons of fame,

Say, were you not, on battle field,

My claims, in justice, forced to yield ?

If Connaught's chiefs, with you allied,

And Munster's warriors stood aside ;

Ne'er, Cormac, mighty as thou art,

Would I my claims forego ;

Nor from my well-won rights depart,

E'en for a stronger foe :

No—not for all the numerous host

That potent Phelim e'er could boast.”

## III.

Then out the son of Morni cried,

That warrior oft in conflict tried,

“ To thee belongs the shame,

Such charges grave as these to bring,

In presence of our noble king,

Against his father's fame.

O Finn, no chief of Cumhall's race,  
 Dared meet the monarch face to face;  
 Right well to thee the fact is known,  
 No king e'er sat on Erin's throne,  
 More great than ours—no, never one  
 In arms could match the mighty Conn."

## IV.

Said Finn to Garraý seated there:  
 "Since thou wast in the fight,  
 Wilt thou, O Garraý, now declare,  
 In truth's and honour's right,  
 When swept the battle o'er the plain,  
 How was my sire, great Cumhall, slain?"

GARRAY.—"A hundred stalwart warriors bold,  
 And be that sum twice ten times told,  
 Dared Cumhall to engage;  
 With early morn was the fight begun,  
 Nor ended with the setting sun;  
 So fiercely burned their rage.  
 From Croaghan of the warlike west,  
 Leath Luchra's warriors on him pressed;  
 Before him hundreds stood combined;—  
 Hundreds made onslaught fierce behind;  
 With sword, and lance, and bearded dart,  
 We hedged him densely round,  
 Until we saw the life-blood start  
 From many a gaping wound.  
 But well did his grey sword that day,  
 It's temper prove on their dense array.  
 From Crimthan of the curling hair,  
 It lopped the youthful head;  
 And Leath Luchra, young and fair,  
 Beneath its vengeance bled.  
 In \*Cneuca's fight the crimson steel  
 Of Cumhall made the bravest reel;

\* Cumhall, the father of Finn, fell by the hand of Gaul Mac Morni, in the battle of Cneuca, a well-known locality in the county of Dublin, named



Nor could we stay his slaughtering course,  
 Till both in front and rear  
 We gathered in collected force,  
 And closed his dread career.  
 Like torrents met with adverse shock,  
 In whirling eddies round the rock,  
 That, though firm-fixed for ages past,  
 Is base-worn doomed to fall at last.  
 Oh ! ne'er let jealous rage defame  
 The glory due to Cumhall's name ;  
 He fell, as Erin's warriors all,  
 In fighting fields rejoice to fall."

FINN.—" Since thus on Cumhall you bestow  
 The praise that to the brave we owe,  
 And generous souls desire ;  
 Garra ! just meed of thanks receive,  
 Cordial and frankly as I give,  
 For my great and glorious sire.  
 Though hate to Trenmore's race you bear,  
 Yet to be just you nobly dare,  
 Dare even here your voice to raise  
 In hated foeman's honest praise.  
 On battle field and roaring wave,  
 The brave man ever loves the brave ;  
 Is even to the valour just  
 That lays his triumphs in the dust.  
 Although it grieves my soul to own  
 The doleful fact, it must be known,  
 That you, on that disastrous day,  
 The bloody triumph bore away :  
 And well may you rejoice to know  
 That then you triumphed o'er your foe ;

Castleknock. O'Halloran's History of Ireland, vol. I., p. 233, gives the following account of that memorable event :—" The battle, as usual, was fierce and bloody, and well maintained for some hours ; but the superior abilities of Gaul, the son of Morni, master of the knights of Connaught, and general to the imperial army, with the number and bravery of his knights, at length prevailed ; the allied troops, closely pressed, gave way on every side ; when Cumhall, seeing all lost, at the head of his guards, attacks Gaul, sword in hand. He fell by the hands of this invincible leader, and every one of his knights shared the same fate."

For had we in the conflict been,  
The victory had been ours, I ween."

GARRAY.—"Nay, tho', great Finn, you had been there,  
As Cumhall only had you sped;  
By sun, and moon, and stars, I swear,  
As Cumhall you had lost your head.  
But amply has your filial ire  
With wounds and death avenged your sire.  
On Banba's verdant fields, a flood  
Your sword has shed of heroes' blood:  
You spared of Conn's brave clansmen few;  
You gallant Leath Luchra slew,  
Of all our sons the pride and boast;  
His loss is Erin's woe:  
That hero worth a numerous host,  
By one man's arm lies low."

FINN.—Were I e'en matchless Gaul to slay,  
With all his warlike line,  
His death, I vow, would ill repay  
The loss of sire like mine.  
Not e'en the fall of Finchair's chief,  
Great Leath, could assuage my grief.  
In Cumhall's dear and honoured name,  
A greater vengeance yet I claim;  
Nor, Garray, will I now conceal  
What spirit rules my breast;  
Till you, and all your clansmen, feel  
Th' unsparing sharpness of my steel,  
That vengeance ne'er shall rest."

V.

Then Cormac, as he quaffed his wine,  
Proposed a fatal sad design,  
By none of all the chiefs approved,  
Who nigh him stood, or round him moved.  
"This contest, mighty Finn! to close,  
And tame your rampant pride,

We now, in Garray's name, propose  
That spears the cause decide."  
Then Osgar, who ne'er felt a fear,  
Cried out aloud—"A chief stands here  
Who dares, with javelin, sword, or spear,  
To meet the chief of loftiest boast  
And strongest arm in Garray's host;  
That vaunting race! who proudly claim  
More glory than adorns their name,  
At Tara's festive board.  
If Finn, perchance, may Osgar hold,  
For speech like this, too rashly bold—  
Let deeds decide—by deeds exprest,  
Be glory's claims—the only test  
Of valour is the sword."  
Then Cairbre, son of Erin's king,  
Cries out, "I back defiance fling,  
And dare the bravest of your band,  
To come and meet me hand to hand."

## VI.

OSSIAN.—This Osgar heard—and chafed with rage,  
Impatient, eager to engage;  
And hard had been the task to stay  
Their conflict, e'en one little day,  
So fierce their anger burned.  
But at the instant, up I stood,  
And to Ciothruah, mild and good,  
The bard of Erin, turned;  
And bade him, by his minstrel spell,  
The gathering storms of passion quell.

## VII.

He heard, obeyed—with magic art  
He touched the chafing warriors' heart;  
And, in a tale of olden time,  
Rehearsed the glorious deeds sublime

Of chiefs Milesian, who of yore,  
Their gallies moored on Erin's shore;  
Chiefs from whose blood fraternal springs  
Th' illustrious race of Erin's kings.  
He sung the dire unnumbered woes  
That from her sons' contentions rose—  
How states and kingdoms, just and wise,  
To grandeur, power, and glory rise,  
And how decline and fall:  
What virtues union can impart;  
How discord rends a nation's heart,  
Saps all her strength—her life-blood drains,  
Subverts her right, and forges chains  
Her spirit to inthral.  
He sung of beauty's magic powers,  
Of courteous knights and ladies' bowers,  
In strains so sweet, they gently stole  
In soft enchantment o'er the soul;  
Bade for a time all discord cease,  
And soothed fierce passions into peace.

## VIII.

The chieftains praised the minstrel's skill,  
Bent their proud spirits to his will;  
Upon him heaped a precious store  
Of brodered robes and imaged ore,  
His genius to reward.  
And much did Finn rejoice to see  
The chiefs of high and low degree,  
So generous to the bard.  
But though the fiery chiefs repress  
The fury stirring in their breast;  
'Twas but a half-extinguished fire  
That soon would rage with flaming ire.



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THE POEM IS ADDRESSED BY OSSIAN TO CAOILTE.

DUAN SECOND.

ARGUMENT.—On the following morning, when the chiefs, who espoused the cause of Finn, were assembled in consultation, it was resolved that they should evince a determination to assert their rights by making a foray, and driving off the royal herds of Tara. Fillan proposed that they should at once take possession of that fortress. Ossian deeming this too hazardous an enterprise, till the whole of their forces had been collected out of the walls of the fortress, they marched forth in military array, and proceeding to the mansion of Angus, a young chieftain, sprung from the Tuatha De Danans, of great power, and skilled in magical arts, they besought him to be their friend and ally in the foray which they were ready to commence. They had already sent forth their forayers to collect the herds, that, when occasion required, might be driven away. Meantime the chiefs again assembled in the royal palace, when the monarch, apprized of their doings, rose up and pronounced a severe sentence on Finn, and said that he must now remain a prisoner. The chiefs heard the monarch in profound silence, till Osgar, stung with resentment, rose and declared, that while he could wield a sword, Finn should not be held in captivity. He called on his friends to show their resolution by their deeds; and they, instantly unsheathing their daggers, each of them slew his antagonist, and they proceeded immediately to drive off the herds which had been previously collected. In their progress they met a young warrior on a high-spirited charger, whom they soon recognized to be Angus, a most efficient friend and assistant. Presently they beheld Cormac and Cairbre pursuing them. The sixteen

Fenian chiefs then formed their ranks in martial order, with their banners, on which were displayed their respective armorial bearings. A battle ensues—the pursuers are defeated—Cairbre is wounded, and Cormac taken prisoner and bound. To mortify him, he is desired by some of the conquerors to carry the cauldron of the army; but this was an indignity which the generous mind of Finn could not suffer the monarch to undergo; and to show that he would rather bear it himself, was taking it up, when Fillan, to put an end to such design, with a resistless stroke of his claymore, cut the cauldron in twain. The Lay concludes by saying that Finn obtained all the rights for which he contended, and Cormac was established in peace on his throne.

Of the original of this Lay, the writer has seen two copies verbally translated. The copy which he has adopted was kindly lent to him by a distinguished Irish scholar. The other, which was taken from the oral dictation of a Connaught peasant, wanted the whole of the first duan, and was in other respects very deficient—a striking instance of the great importance and necessity of collecting and comparing all the different copies which can be procured of our ancient Irish compositions—a task worthy of some competent and properly qualified Irish Aristarchus.

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# I.

Next morn beheld the strife resumed;  
 Again with rage our warriors fumed,  
 Each fanning in each breast a flame  
 That thrilled and fired the glowing frame.  
 When met in council, 'twas agreed  
 To levy war with all our speed—  
 To let deceitful Tara know,  
 In cause of Finn, we feared no foe;  
     Defied, we dared defy.  
 And sixteen warriors laid their plan,  
 The bravest of the Boisgne clan,  
     Their might in arms to try;  
 On Tara's lands to make a prey,  
 And drive the choicest herds away.\*

\* In early ages, as the principal wealth of the chiefs and rulers consisted of flocks and herds, the driving them off from their owners was resented as the greatest injury, and became the immediate cause of an appeal to arms. Achilles in the *Iliad* assigns as a reason for declining to wage war against the Trojans, that they never made a foray on his cattle.

“The distant Trojans never injured me;  
 To Phthia's realms no hostile troops they led,  
 Safe in her vales my warlike coursers fed.”

## II.

With us the Clanna-Morni stood,  
 And valiant Gaul of cheerful mood ;  
 And Ronan's clansmen—men of worth,  
 With whom we sent our questers forth,  
 From hill and glen—with goad and thong,  
 To drive the bellowing herds along ;  
 Though Fillan urged with instant speed  
 To do a great and glorious deed,  
 The work of vengeance to begin,  
 And by surprise the fortress win.  
 This I advised not, till the last  
 Of all our host had safely past  
 Through Tara's gates.—With spears upraised—  
 Their points with banderolles emblazed,  
 That brightly shone like fiery stars  
 Portending sanguinary wars ;  
 We sped, and, with our merry men,  
 The echoes woke of hill and glen,  
     Of mountain, rock, and cave.  
 Oh ! ne'er in Erin's ample round,  
 Could chiefs to equal ours be found,  
     So beautiful, so brave.

So Pope renders the passage. Cowper, more faithful to the original, says,

    " No Trojan ever drove  
 My pastures—steeds or oxen took of mine ;  
 Or plundered of their fruits the golden fields  
 Of Phthia the deep-soiled."

Old Nestor gives the following description of a foray in which he was principal actor :—

Oh ! for the vigour of those days again  
 When Elis for her cattle which we took  
 Strove with us, and Itymoneus I slew,  
 Brave offspring of Hypirochus ; he dwelt  
 In Elis, and while I the pledges drove,  
 Stood for his herd, but fell among the first  
 By a spear hurled from my victorious arm.  
 Then fled the rustic multitude, and we  
 Drove off abundant booty from the plain  
 Herds fifty of fat beeves, large flocks of goats  
 As many, with as many sheep and swine,  
 And full thrice fifty mares of brightest hue,  
 All breeders, many with their foals beneath.

COWPER'S *Iliad* XL, 807—819.

## III.

To Angus\* now our steps we bend,  
 The son of Deaga, who abode  
 In mansion, by our chosen road,  
 Our cause to ask him to befriend.  
 Though once in adverse ranks we fought,  
 His generous aid we now besought;  
 Bade all past wrongs forgotten lie,  
 And by a strong and mutual tie,  
 In this our cause, both just and true,  
 Our former friendship to renew,  
 And begged that, in our foray, he  
 Our helper and our guide would be.  
 This done—by youthful Angus led,  
 O'er Tara's fair demesnes we spread;  
 O'er pasture, heath, and fen;  
 And soon saw gathering in a crowd,  
 Dense as a murky thunder-cloud,  
 Dark-shadowing hill and glen,  
 The kine that in the vallies lowed,  
 The steers that on the hills abode,  
 From copse and lawn, from crag and knoll,  
 Like dark-brown torrents when they roll  
 A deluge to the plain;  
 The fattest beeves from crib and stall,  
 High-fed for feasts in Tara's hall,  
 A sleek, sharp-horned, stern-visaged throng,  
 Impelled by goad and spear along,  
 Came rushing on amain,  
 With hoofs loud-clattering o'er the ground,  
 With many a high and frolic bound,  
 With butting horn and bellowing roar  
 That round the welkin rung.

\* Angus, usually called Aongus Og, was son of Dagdae of the Tuatha-de-Danan race. He was a celebrated Druid, and respected as a person of great power and influence. His principal residence was situated on the banks of the Boyne; he was also said to reside occasionally in Lochlin and in *Tir Tarngain* (Canaan), like Mananan Mac Lir. He was the foster-father and tutor of Diarmuid Dunn, the Fenian chief, and his guardian and protector in all difficulties and dangers. His name frequently occurs in the writings of our bards and romance writers.—N. K.



The drovers spurred them on before,  
And lays of victory sung.  
But them we charged, with watch and ward,  
The gathered herds to keep and guard,  
Till back we came with all our powers,  
To take them thence to Almhuin's towers.

## IV.

Again in Tara's royal hall,  
Behold our chiefs assembled all;  
Again in revelry and play,  
As was our wont, to spend the day;  
When Erin's monarch, whom the laws  
Empowered to hear and judge his cause—

A learned judge was he;  
Rising in majesty severe,  
Said—"Now, O Finn! our charges hear,  
And eke our firm decree.

Arraigned for treason there you stand,  
For crimes against your father-land,

Her sceptre and her crown;  
A prisoner here, to tame your pride,  
In servile chains you must abide.  
Since in our royal laws despite,  
You still obstruct your monarch's right,

His laws you trample down.  
Our herds you make your lawless prey,  
And drive our choicest beeves away;  
What can you more—but boldly own  
Your right to sit on Erin's throne?

Such treason shalt thou rue.  
No more on Tara's fair demesnes,  
No more in Tailtean's fertile plains,

Dare thou the chase pursue.  
In Meath, through Usnath's heathy dells,  
In Almhuin that o'er Leinster swells,  
Great Finn of hosts! no more be found  
In quest of game with horn and hound,  
But here, in Tara's walls remain  
To spend thy rage and hug thy chain."

## V.

No murmur from the chieftains broke  
The silence deep, while Cormac spoke.  
But Osgar, wrung with pain and grief,  
Young, dauntless, wound-inflicting chief,  
Uprising with a sudden bound,  
That made proud Tara's walls resound,  
Cried out aloud—"While e'er this hand  
Can grasp a spear or wield a brand;  
Or while you fifteen warriors bide  
Still firm and faithful by my side,  
No power on earth, though great and strong,  
Shall e'er on Finn inflict such wrong.  
Up! warriors, up! let daggers show  
What fealty to our Finn we owe."

## VI.

Then loud and fierce the tumult grew—  
Our sixteen daggers forth we drew,  
And each his adverse champion slew,  
Of those who stood king Cormac near,  
To guard the throne from harm and fear.  
Distained were Tara's walls with gore;  
Blood streamed along the rushy floor,  
Until the gates were opened wide;  
Then forth we strode in martial pride,  
A firm determined band.  
We passed the ramparts circling mound,  
And from the open region round,  
From Tara's fertile land,  
Ten hundred beeves, a matchless prey,  
With goad and spear we drove away.  
All that the herdsmen's power and skill  
Could lure or drive from plain or hill:  
And on to Almhuin's fortress strong,  
We drove the bellowing herds along.  
But ere we came where Tailtean sees  
Her banners floating in the breeze,

Close on our rear we saw advance,  
With bossy shield and bearded lance,  
Cormac and Cairbre—flushed with rage,  
Impatient, instant fight to wage;  
The herds to rescue, to efface  
Th' insulted monarch's late disgrace;  
Hoping, with eager barbarous joy,  
The Clanna Boisgne to destroy,  
And for their slaughtered warriors' sake,  
In blood their burning vengeance slake.

## VII.

While forward still we pressed with speed,  
A youth we met of beauty rare,  
With pearly teeth and auburn hair,  
Approaching on a mettled steed;  
His mane, high curved o'er sinewy chest,  
Toss'd proudly like a warrior's crest;  
His solid hoof, black, horny, round,  
Made music as he pawed the ground.  
Fiery his eye—and such his pace  
As showed him matchless in the race.  
His rider seemed a courteous knight,  
All sheathed in shining armour bright;  
And nearer as he drew,  
Much did our hearts rejoice to see  
That Angus, our young friend, was he,  
Our ally firm and true:  
A chieftain of De-Danan line,  
And skilled in magic arts divine.  
Fame said that, by his skill, again  
To life he could restore the slain.  
He on that day, with lash and goad,  
Propelled our prey along their road;  
And when our beeves, oppressed with toil,  
Sunk lame and helpless on the soil,  
On car and sledge his herdsmen fleet  
Conveyed them to a safe retreat.

When weak and faint our soldiers lay,  
 His ready aid was nigh,  
 To help them on their weary way,  
 And leache's aid apply.

## VIII.

Now grasping firm our spears, we turned  
 To face th' advancing foes;  
 And all our souls with ardour burned  
 In battle shock to close.  
 Loose floating to the breeze we raised  
 Our sixteen standards high,  
 With rich armorial signs emblazed,\*  
 Of many a various dye.  
 Our Finn's, of princely Heremon sprung,  
 By all our bards and minstrels sung—  
 Was of a silken tissue white,  
 Resplendent in the sunny light,  
 Full sixteen ells its ample fold,  
 When from its jewelled staff unrolled,  
 Displayed a sun of burnished gold;  
 And round it many a silvery star,  
 With long reflections beamed afar.  
 A mountain ash with berries red,  
 That raised in brilliant hues its head,  
 Was by the gallant Osgar borne,  
 Still first to lead the hope forlorn.

\* Ollam Fodla (*pron. Olav Fola*), the fortieth monarch of Ireland (A. M. 3082), is highly eulogized by our Irish writers as a prince eminently distinguished by learning, wisdom, and extraordinary endowments, and, according to Keating, of the strictest virtue that was ever seated on a throne. Anxious for the continual improvement and prosperity of his country, he instituted the great convention of Tara,

“That great assembly where the nobles met  
 And priests, and poets, and philosophers,  
 To make new laws and to correct the old,  
 And to advance the honour of his country.”

In a state so accustomed to settle all disputes by the sword, and in which the right to the throne was so frequently contested, the support and discipline of armies was a subject of indispensable necessity. In the great triennial convention it was “enacted that every great lord, or chief commander, should have a particular coat of arms assigned him, according to his deserts, whereby he might be known to the antiquaries, and other men of knowledge, either by sea or land, when he appeared in arms, or otherwise.”



On Dermod's flag a dark green yew  
A sable shadow round it threw—

A chief of princely race  
Was Dermod, ever bland and kind,  
Beloved by all of womankind

For courtesy and grace.

On great Mac Morni's flag, behold,  
In glowing tints, a piper bold;  
War-music his delight.

He seems, upon the tented plain,  
To rouse in high heroic strain,

The spirit of the fight.

On Fillan's flowing silk, a tree  
Was sprigged in rich embroidery:  
This the device—upon its field  
Nine spears beside a bossy shield.

Two hounds in chase, graced Luay's flag;

Mac Luay's showed a bounding stag;  
Our little Hugh's a furze-bush bore,  
With golden blossoms garnished o'er;  
With prickles armed on every side  
Dense as the urchin's spiny hide.

Where'er this flag the onslaught led,  
The bold pursuers turned and fled;  
Though fierce and furious their attack  
To win the spoils of Tara back.

Of silken tissue wide and long,

Twice ten full ells and four;

That beauteous rose our ranks among,

Was the flag that Ronan bore;

High waving o'er our warriors proud,  
Like a sun-shot, brilliant, crimson cloud.

Twelve ells of silk, of scarlet dye,

Warm as the orient morning-sky,

Formed Caoilte's banner bright.

The upright Colla's flag upon,

Of twisted gold two circles shone,

Such as our victor-champions bring

From fallen chief and vanquished king,

When slain in single fight.

A flea's wand of magic powers,  
Twelve baskets, with a store  
Of mellow fruit and fragrant flowers,  
The flag of Fergus bore;  
Renowned, as Erin's bard, among  
The sweetest of the sons of song.  
O'er six broad stripes of purest lawn,  
Or linen white as snow;  
A warrior with his claymore drawn,  
Who seemed to brave the foe  
That near him stood in arms arrayed,  
Feardonan's ensign fair displayed;  
A chief that fearful combat waged  
Where'er the battle fiercest raged.

## IX.

Near as we saw their ranks advance  
With flashing sword and levelled lance,  
We forward sped with steps as fleet,  
And met as adverse torrents meet,  
When swoln with melting snow,  
O'er ragged rock and fissured steep  
They rush, with many a headlong leap,  
And in the glen below,  
Each dashing each, in wild recoil,  
Their whirling eddies foam and boil,  
The woods, and rocks, and hills around,  
Aloud reverberate the sound.

## X.

Now swords crossed swords, and storms of blows  
In wound-inflicting contest rose,  
As man encountered man:  
Soon widely covered was the field  
With many a fallen crest and shield;  
The blood in torrents ran.  
Each fought, as if on him alone  
The fortunes of the day were thrown;

Yea, all with such a brave delight,  
As Erin's warriors ever fight.  
But oh ! it wrings my heart with pain  
To tell the numbers of our slain—

Slain by no foreign foe ;  
For then with glory they would lie—  
But by fraternal hands to die,

This is a tale of wo !  
To none it gives an honest fame—  
No glory—but inglorious shame.

## XI.

Though royal Cormac well sustained  
The honour of his crown,  
When near him few alive remained  
He too was stricken down.  
Upon him close we pressed around,  
And soon the royal captive bound,  
For it was aye our chieftain's care  
The lives of vanquished foes to spare.  
Prince Cairbre, too, upon the plain,  
Beside a hillock of the slain,

Was faint and bleeding laid.  
Him gently placed we on his shield,  
And bore him from the crimson field,  
To seek the leache's aid.

## XII.

Our haughty victors then, to show  
How they could bring a monarch low,  
Their servile toils to share,

To Cormac gave a stern command,  
The cauldron of the Fenian band  
Upon his neck to bear.

Finn grieved that in a task so mean  
His once loved monarch should be seen ;  
And, with a generous kind intent,  
Himself beneath the burden bent ;

Till Fillan, stung with shame and grief  
In such low task to see his chief,  
Sheer through the cauldron's brazen round  
    So whirled his shining blade,  
That many a foot beneath the ground  
    Its trenchant edge was stayed.  
In twain the massy cauldron cleft  
We mid the spoils ungathered left.  
Then was the sun-burst banner raised,  
    That oft from Cona's turrets high,  
In all its glory bright emblazed,  
    Waved the proud sign of victory.  
'Twas Finn's to dictate terms of peace;  
    Secure the rights he named his own;  
To bid intestine discord cease,  
    And fix the monarch on his throne.



# THE LAY

OF

## TALC MAC TRONE.

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### OMENS OF HIS APPROACH.

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"TAILC-MAC-TREOIN signifies *The Firm, son of the Mighty*." A Duan, or part of the Lay of Talc Mac Trone, was published by Theophilus O'Flanagan in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society, Dublin, 1808, with a versified translation by Mr. William Leahy. It is given as a "genuine effusion of the genius that produced the poems attributed to Ossian," with which however, it may be fairly presumed, the genuine Ossian had no concern. It is added that "vast numbers of these poems are still preserved in Ireland, written and by rote. They are even still the great source of long nights' entertainment in the *Irish* parts of Ireland; together with the old romances or Fenian stories (*sgela fianaidecta*), upon all the exploits of the Fenian heroes, or ancient Irish militia."

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### DUAN FIRST.

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ARGUMENT.—The Lay commences with a request from Patrick to Ossian, to inform him how the strife, which was the subject of a former conversation, commenced. Ossian replies that the Fenians had assembled, as usual, on a green hill, when the Druid of Tara suddenly arising in their assembly, said that he observed certain signs in the clouds prognostic of some approaching calamity. Finn replied, as became an intrepid warrior, that he had no fear of any such portents; but on having his attention directed to them more particularly, he perceived that the signs were ominous. He expressed his fears to Oscar, who at first thought with Finn that they should be disregarded; while some of the Fenians pursued their various sports, and others expressed their apprehensions by their melancholy aspect. Conan treats their fears with ludicrous scorn. The more prudent Druid advises that one-half of their host should retire to rest, and the other half should keep watch

and ward. Finn, in compliance with this advice, desires Oscar to watch during the night, and in reply to an objection of Oscar as to Finn's retiring to repose, says that night is the season in which he enjoys prophetic visions. He then desires Dermuid Dun and Gaul to be companions to Oscar. Conan is asked to take his station on a neighbouring dun, or fortified eminence, whence his voice of alarm, in case of an enemy's approach, could be heard in the most remote part of the camp. Conan absolutely refuses compliance, in spite of the remonstrances of MacLuay and Dermuid, but, by the persuasion of Oscar, is at last induced to go, being accompanied by little Hugh, and Finn's two favourite dogs Sgeolan and Braun.

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I.

PATRICK.—O Ossian, sweetest voice of Song,  
Thy tales of olden time prolong,  
And tell us now—for thou canst tell—  
How rose the strife—what warriors fell?

OSSIAN.—With Finn, our chieftain wise and good,  
We Fenians, all in joyous mood,  
Had met upon yon verdant hill  
To play at games of strength and skill;  
When sudden Tara's Druid rose,  
Prophetic of impending woes,  
And cried, in anguish strong—  
“Dark fears my boding soul oppress,  
That soon some sad and dire distress  
Will come our ranks among.”  
“What wo,” said Finn, our fearless chief,  
“Can us befall, what cause of grief?  
We ne'er from face of danger flee,  
Nor dread a foe by land or sea.”

DRUID.—“Yet trust me, chief renowned in war,  
The mischief is not distant far.  
Behold yon clouds of crimson dye,  
With threats dense-crowding in the sky;  
Upon the gathering storms they ride  
In close battalions side by side.”

## II.

With eyes upturned, my noble sire  
Beheld the sanguine omen dire,  
Dense clouds of mingled blood and fire;  
“Too true,” he cried, “those signs portend  
Sad woes that o’er our host impend.”  
In haste to Oscar then he spoke:  
“Brave warrior, as thou art,  
I fear, against some awful stroke,  
Thou now must arm thy heart;  
Behold, careering in the air,  
Yon clouds of red portentous glare.”

OSCAR.—“Great chieftain of puissant arm,  
What should we dread of grief or harm  
From omens in the sky?  
And we—the potent Fenians—here,  
Who never bowed our souls to fear,  
But dare all foes defy.”

## III.

With musing thoughts and eyes upraised,  
Long on the storm-borne clouds we gazed;  
But some in frolic mood were seen  
Light-capering on the grassy green;  
Apart sat others on the hill  
With rueful visage, boding ill.  
Then out bald Conan loudly spoke:—  
“A cloud who blanches to behold,  
Dear comrades, ’tis a pretty joke  
To rank him high with heroes bold!”  
Next spoke the Druid, grave and wise—  
“Great Cumhall’s son, I this advise:  
Let half the host find strength in sleep,  
And half in arms their station keep;  
And each, in turn, keep watch and ward,  
The camp against all foes to guard.”

Then loud the Fenian trumpet blew,  
 Re-echoing far through hill and vale:  
 The Fenians round their chieftain drew,  
 All clad in burnished mail.  
 Then Finn his Oscar thus addressed;  
 "Brave, generous youth, our shield and boast,  
 Here wilt thou till the morning rest,  
 To watch the foe and guard our host?  
 While I my eyes in slumber close,  
 And give my frame a brief repose."

OSCAR.—"If bold invading foes you dread  
 Ere purple morn arise,  
 Should Fenian chieftain hide his head,  
 Or close in sleep his eyes?\*"  
 Great chief, may such inglorious tale,  
 Ne'er shame the sons of Innisfail!"

FINN.—"Oh! well thou knowest, or shouldst know,  
 That Finn ne'er feared, nor fears a foe;  
 But, in the tranquil hour of night,  
 He sees full many a vision bright,  
 And, gifted with a prophet's eye,  
 Sees far into futurity."

## IV.

Then Finn, in accent mild and bland,  
 Asked Dermuid Dunn if he would stand  
 By Oscar's side, till morn arose,  
 To guard the camp from coming foes.  
 "'Twas ne'er my way," the chief replied,  
 From foeman's path to turn aside.

\* Thus the Dream accosts Agamemnon in the Second Book of the Iliad:

"Canst thou with all a monarch's care oppress,  
 Oh Atreus son! canst thou indulge thy rest?  
 Ill fits a chief who mighty nations guides,  
 Directs in council, and in war presides,  
 To whom its safety a whole people owes,  
 To waste long nights in indolent repose."



With Oscar, to my soul most dear,  
 Will I no danger shun;  
 With him no warrior's arm I fear,  
 That ever brandished sword or spear,  
 No, none beneath the sun."\*

FINN.—"Wilt thou, too, Gaul, in arms renowned,  
 To great achievements born,  
 With Oscar pace our tent around,  
 Till blush the orient morn?—  
 To guard a camp or tower from harm,  
 No bulwark like a hero's arm."†

GAUL.—"Gladly will I strict vigil keep,  
 Till shines the morning light,  
 In happy dreams your senses steep;  
 Sweet visions charm your sight!"  
 "I too," cried Fillan, "ready stand,  
 With watchful eye and trusty brand,  
 Obedient to our chief's command,  
 Lest friend or foe, with entrance rude,  
 Upon his precious rest intrude,  
 While in his tent entranced he lies,  
 Rapt in sublimest ecstasies."

FINN.—"Bald Conan, thou whose voice from far  
 Sounds like the trumpet-blast of war,  
 On yonder dun thy station hold,  
 Fast by the promontory bold,  
 And if a coming foe you spy,  
 Shout till the rocks and woods reply."

\* Ajax, about to meet Hector in single combat, boasts thus:—

"Lives there a chief whom Ajax ought to dread,  
 Ajax, in all the toils of battle bred?  
 From warlike Salamis I drew my birth,  
 And born to combats fear no force on earth."

*Iliad VII., 235.*—POPE.

† The classical reader may recollect a similar sentiment in the Persians of Æschylus, in *Œdipus Tyrannus*, and in Thucydides, but none more pithy than the declaration of the Irish chieftain who said that he preferred

A castle of bones,  
 To a castle of stones.

CONAN.—“ If to that dun alone I go,  
Sheer through me let a dart be sped—  
If there I go to spy the foe,  
Back may I come—stark dead !”  
“ Bald Conan, shame !” MacLuay cries,  
With anger flashing from his eyes—  
“ Is this an answer meet to give  
To him beneath whose rule we live—  
Who may our prompt obedience claim,  
Our lord, our king of deathless fame?  
Bald Conan, shame ! away, away !  
And, as our king commands, obey.”

CONAN.—“ If Finn be lord and king, I own  
It ill becomes such chief sublime,  
Me to despatch alone, alone,  
Yon promontory bold to climb,  
And watch till some huge champion grim  
Has hacked my body limb from limb.”

DERMUID.—“ O Conan, none our host among,  
Has voice like thine, so sweet, so strong ;  
And when a foe you spy,  
None such a shout can send afar,  
Our sons to marshal for the war  
And tell what foe is nigh.”

CONAN.—“ Enough,” said Conan, “ cease your strain,  
Sweet Dermuid of the velvet paws,  
With me such coaxings all are vain,  
In vain you urge your cause.  
Alone I move not to the coast,  
For Finn and all the Fenian host.”

OSCAR.—Said Oscar then “ In such a task,  
Some friendly aid you well may ask.  
Then Conan hear—our little Hugh,  
A warrior ever bold and true,  
Shall thy companion be ;

'With Brann, with Sgeolan, and the rest  
Of our strong hounds—the fleetest, best—  
Shall bear thee company.”

OSSIAN.—Moved by his words, forth Conan strode  
With Hugh, and took the mountain road;  
While Brann, in many a frolic bound,  
With Sgeolan, ran the chiefs around;  
Till in the dun that topped the steep  
They stood—both watch and ward to keep.

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The matter being thus settled, Finn retired to his couch. In his slumbers he was disturbed by distressing dreams, in which he saw little Hugh headless, and Gaul in desperate strife with a fierce warrior, viz., Talc Mac Trone. Awaking, he called the Druid to interpret his dreams. The Druid informed him that the country would soon be invaded, but that Hugh and Gaul would not be slain. Presently a loud shout was heard. Conan, followed by the hounds, came running with all speed (leaving Hugh behind) to announce that the invaders were nigh. Interrogated by Oscar, where he had left little Hugh, Conan replies that he left him in a cave, and that his only concern was for his own safety. Oscar proceeds to the cave, and finds him in a state of debility and exhaustion, for which he accounts by the peril of his situation, when at a remote distance from the Fenians.

The invader, whose approach is here announced, was Talc Mac Trone, the hero of the following Lay:—

# THE LAY

OF

## TALC MAC TRONE.

---

HE COMBATS WITH OSCAR AND IS SLAIN.

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### DUAN SECOND.

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ARGUMENT.—Patrick requests Ossian to gratify him by repeating one of his tales of the times of old. Ossian replies that it is painful to remember departed joys, and then proceeds to describe the Hill of Slaughter, where Finn and his men being one day assembled, beheld a lady of surpassing beauty approaching them. She was courteously accosted by Finn, who desired to know the cause of her coming. She informed him that she had been forcibly united in wedlock to one whom she describes as a monster rather than a man—that she had sought of many protection from his cruelty, but found none. Finn declares that he will be her guardian while he has breath. TALC is observed approaching, and to be in form and aspect what she had represented. He challenges the bravest of the Fenians to combat, and is answered by Oscar, who, after a desperate conflict, gains the victory. The lady, on beholding the field of battle, expires of grief, and the hill is named the Hill of Slaughter.

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#### I.

PATRICK.—Sweet Ossian, who with thee can vie  
In all the arts of minstrelsy?  
What hand like thine such music bring,  
To charm the ear, from sounding string?  
Or with such magic power control  
Each thought and movement of the soul?  
Oh! yes, thou canst creations bright  
From nought to being call;



With fair enchantments daze the sight,  
And every sense enthrall;  
Canst bid the past before our eyes  
As vivid as the present rise;  
And, by thy minstrel witchery bold,  
Transport us to the days of old.  
Or on Time's cloudy forehead scan  
The future weal or wo of man.

Again, great bard, resume thy tale  
Of the gallant sons of Innisfail;  
Rehearse how Talc to Erin came,  
And what befel his beauteous dame.

OSSIAN.—O sage, in whose fair hand is placed  
A snow-white crook with jewels graced;  
Sad, son of Calphruin, 'tis to dwell  
On sorrows past, and sad to tell  
Of joys for aye gone by;  
Their memory bids my tear-drops start,  
Divides in twain my bleeding heart,  
And wrings with agony.

## II.

Yon hill—the Hill of Slaughter—view;  
Just is the name it bears, and true:  
Fair-swelling to the western sky  
It lifts its green-grass summit high.  
The Fenian host, of nimble steeds,  
With Finn, of high heroic deeds,  
As wont, assembled there;  
When lo! in shining radiance, bright  
As the glorious sun in his lofty height,  
Approached a lady fair.  
She walked majestic as a queen;  
Her silken robe, of crimson sheen,  
Waved lightly in the wind.  
Her locks, on neck and shoulder flung,  
In glancing wavy ringlets hung  
With threads of gold entwined.

Her taper waist a girdle crossed,  
 With bright and sparkling gems embossed—  
 But oh ! her eyes were brighter far  
 Than sparkling gem—than morning star.  
 Soft on her cheek such dimples played !  
 Of every heart they capture made ;  
 While from her lips of rosy hue,  
 More soft and sweet than honey dew,  
 Her accents fell. Her looks expressed  
 Some sorrow harboured in her breast.  
 As nigh she came she bent her knee  
 To all with gentlest courtesy,  
 But chief to Finn. Of Finn she prayed,  
     In this her trying hour,  
 That he would grant her friendly aid,  
     And shield her by his power.

## III.

“ O queen of matchless form and grace,  
 To Finn declare thy name and race,”  
     (Thus said the Fenian lord,)  
 “ O sweeter is thy voice to me  
 Than sounds of sweetest melody,  
     Or harp’s harmonious chord.”

LADY.—“ Great chief, Naivnua is my name,  
     The cruel Garva’s child ;  
 He rules in Greece, well known to fame,  
 With tyrant sway—oh ! grief and shame,  
     To Talc, a monster wild,  
 Maugre my prayers, and tears, and cries,  
 He linked me fast in wedlock’s ties.”

FINN.—“ What drew thee from thy husband’s side ?  
     Illustrious queen, declare ;—  
 To me thy secret soul confide,  
     And, by thy beauteous hand, I swear,  
     Long as I breathe this vital air,  
 No wrong shall thee betide.”

## IV.

"Then hear the cause for which I fled—  
That o'er my cheek of native red  
Has dismal hues of sorrow spread.

Talc is a wretch, of men the scorn,  
The hate of every woman born,  
In face and form, but more in mind,  
A savage of the feline kind;\*

\* Talc Mac Trone must be altogether an imaginary hero, raised up by the genius of the bard to show the superiority of the Fenians in his overthrow. There is, however, some historical foundation for the description given of his form and features. The Irish, like the English and other nations, frequently designated their kings by names descriptive of something remarkable in their history or appearance. England had her Longshanks, Ironsides, Crook-back — Ireland her Black-knee, Long-hands, Cathead. Cairbre Caitheann, says Keating, was so called because "his ears were of an uncommon shape, and resembled the ears of a cat." This was enough for the bard. He had only to give his hero a black visage and a caudal appendage, with which the description is completed in a MS. copy of the original, thus literally rendered:—

"I had great cause to look on him with hatred,  
For his visage is as black as coal;  
This man of deformed figure has  
The ears, head, and tail of a cat."

Mr. O'Flanagan's classical taste led him to reject the literal meaning, and to suppose that the description of Talc was suggested by the artificial adornment of the helmet having for the crest the head of a wild cat grinning like the boar's on the casque of Ulysses (*Iliad* X., 263.)

—"Without, in order spread  
A boar's white teeth grinned horrid o'er his head."

He adds—"The skin of the Lion-Cat in Persia, described by Dr. Goldsmith, as larger and more fierce than even the wild one, may have covered the helm of the eastern warrior, as he very probably was a Persian prince."

Talc Mac Trone, though no beauty, was greatly surpassed in some of his most forbidding features by others of the *dramatis personæ* of romance. In one of the adventures of Sir Colgrevice, as stated by himself at one of King Arthur's annual entertainments, he said that as he was proceeding through a forest he saw

"The fowlest wight,  
That ever yit man saw in light,"

and the description given of the monster certainly justifies the epithet. He had an enormous head; his forehead was broader than "a twa large span:"

"His face was ful brede and flat,  
His nose was cutted als a cat;  
His browes war like litel buskes  
And his tethe like bare tuskes;  
A ful grete bulge opon his bak,  
There was noght made withouten lac:  
His chin was fast until his brest."

With this lovely creature, of a size more than gigantic, Sir Colgrevice was disposed to fight; but it harmlessly entered into conversation with him, assuring him that it was a man, and was the keeper of the savage beasts in the forest.

Long have I roamed both far and wide,  
 To courts and camps preferred my prayer,  
 Sought lords of power, and kings beside,  
 To guard me with parental care:  
 To all but to the Fenian train,  
 I prayed for aid, but prayed in vain."

## V.

Said Cumhall's generous son—"In me,  
 Young daughter fair, behold  
 The chief who will your guardian be,  
 Till his arm in death lies cold,  
 And the seven brave bands of the Fenian pride,  
 Are lying all slaughtered by his side."

NAIVNUA.—"O noble Finn, alas! I fear,  
 The deed will never match the word;  
 Such might is in the maddening spear,  
 Such terrors in the sword  
 Of him I flee—No mortal force  
 Seems able to arrest his course.  
 From realm to realm, o'er weak and strong,  
 On conquest bent, he sweeps along;  
 Such his black path as lies behind  
 The raging flame and the whirling wind."

FINN.—"O lady fair, with the golden hair,  
 These idle fears dispel;  
 Yon sun's radiant eye, no power can espy  
 Too strong for the Fenians to quell."

## VI.

Soon near-advancing o'er the lea,  
 With a hurried step, bold Talc we see;  
 And, dire to tell! his head and face  
 Were like the wild-cat's savage race;  
 To Finn no greeting kind be made,  
 But he named his spouse and he shook his blade,  
 And challenged to the fight.



We sent ten hundred warriors forth,  
 All clad in arms, all men of worth.  
 Of whom might each a leader be  
 To guide a host to victory,\*  
 But none escaped his might.  
 O Patrick of the cheerless creed,  
 We saw our bravest warriors bleed,  
 A hundred chiefs, told ten times o'er,  
 All sunk in death, lay stretched in gore.

## VII.

OSSIAN.—With the mingled pride and trembling grief  
 Which fathers only know,  
 I heard my Oscar pray the chief  
 To let him meet the foe.  
 Said Finn—"My son, I fear you ask,  
 For strength like yours, too hard a task—  
 Yet go—achieve the arduous deed—  
 And deathless glory be your meed."

## VIII.

Five days they in the conflict stood,  
 Five nights they took no rest nor food;  
 Deeds of heroic fame were done—  
 Talc fell—and victory crowned my son.  
 Then three loud shouts we gave,  
 For the Fenians slain a shout of wo,  
 Two shouts of triumph o'er the foe,  
 O'er Talc and his bloody grave.

## IX.

Mournful the tale I now must tell  
 Of what the noble dame befel—

\* Sex et trecenti milites, omnes patricii, omnes unius gentis, quorum neminem ducem sperneret egregius quibuslibet temporibus senatus, ibant, unius familiæ viribus Vejenti populo pestem minitantes.

Fabii cæsi ad unum omnes—trecentos sex perisse satis convenit.—  
 T. LIV., *lib. ii.*

When she saw the carnage-covered plain  
Bedewed with blood and heaped with slain,  
Pale turned her cheek—her spirit fled,  
And she slept with death on his gory bed.  
Thus after all her sorrows dire  
In youth and beauty to expire !\*

Heart-rending was the view.  
The hill that saw our warriors fall  
The Hill of Slaughter still we call,  
A name, alas ! too true.

\* The name given to the heroine of this Lay, in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin (1808) is *Nivra*—in Irish, "*Niamh-nuadh-crothac*," which signifies, "Splendid youthful form."

# THE LAY

OF

## TALC MAC TRONE.

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MEARGACH OF GREEN SHARP BLADES COMES TO  
REVENGE ON THE FENIANS THE DEATH OF TALC  
MAC TRONE, HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW.

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### DUAN THIRD.

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**ARGUMENT.**—After the fall of Talc the Fenians were not suffered to enjoy a long respite from their warlike toils. Another chief as formidable as Talc came with threatening aspect to the field in quest of vengeance for the death of his kinsman Talc, and his wife, both of whom he had been led to suppose were destroyed by treachery. Being interrogated by little Hugh as to the object of his approach, he replies that he would inform none but the chief of the Fenians. When led to the presence of the chief he inquired if it was by his hand that Talc was slain, and was told in reply that he must declare his own name before he could be informed. He then declared himself to be Meargach of the green sharp-sword, a hero whom no blade could wound. Oscar, feeling indignant to hear such vaunts, says, that unless he be guarded by some enchantment, he could overcome him in single combat. Finn, after extolling the valour of Talc, tells how he fell by the hand of Oscar. Meargach then tauntingly inquires wherefore they had murdered his wife. Finn disclaims and repels the foul charge—says that she died of grief, and concludes by informing Meargach, that if he came in search of vengeance, an opportunity will be granted to him of seeking it either in single combat, or in a general engagement of the two armies.

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#### I.

OSSIAN.—As by the hill's green slope we lay  
To pass the sluggish hours away;  
A warrior tall, in crested pride,  
Approached with haughty martial stride.

To Finn and to the Fenian train,  
He gave no greeting good;  
But looking round in high disdain,  
He asked in furious mood,  
“Where is the leader of your host,  
Your great defender, pride, and boast?”

## II.

Then asked stout-hearted little Hugh,  
“Pray, mighty warrior! who are you?  
Declare from what far land you came—  
Your business here—your rank—your name.”

MEARGACH.—Until your leader great I see,  
I tell no mannikin like thee.

LITTLE HUGH.—“Then I to Finn will be your guide—  
I know his station well;  
’Tis by a nook in the hill’s green side,  
Near where the champion fell.”

## III.

The warrior followed in the rere,  
While Hugh sped on before,  
E’en to the Hill of Slaughter, where  
Great Talc was stretched in gore.  
And thence not far our Finn was seen,  
Known by his princely air and mien,  
When Hugh exclaimed—“Strange warrior bold,  
Our Fenian chief you now behold,  
The bulwark of our isle—  
If here you come with dark intent,  
On mischief and on vengeance bent,  
We all your might in arms defy—  
We dread no power beneath the sky,  
But at your vengeance smile.”



## IV.

MEARGACH TO FINN.—“ Art thou then he—renowned  
afar—

Great Finn—invincible in war ?  
The stalwart knight whose slaughtering glaive  
Has stretched great Talc in a bloody grave ?  
No warrior true, of honest fame,  
Will e'er deny his deeds or name.”

FINN.—“ First thy own name and tale unfold—  
Then what you ask shall all be told.”

MEARGACH.—“ My name and tale I'll ne'er deny—  
Meargach of sharp green blades am I.  
No champion's might in arms I dread—  
No sword e'er in my blood grew red.”

## V.

By such high boasting sharply stung,  
Up lion-hearted Oscar sprung,  
And cried—“ What charm thy frame surrounds,  
To guard thee thus from swords and wounds ?  
Does thy own hand protect thee so,  
Against the arms of every foe ?”

MEARGACH.—“ No champion that e'er sprung to birth,  
Or moved upon this ridge of earth,  
Though great in deeds of war,  
Has with his trusty spear or sword,  
With edge or point my body gored,  
Or on me left a scar.”

OSCAR.—“ Great Meargach of the sharp green blade,  
If here you come to prove our host,  
We shrink not from your arm dismayed,  
Not long shall be your boast.  
Know, Meargach, one who now stands here,  
Could search your liver with his spear.”

MEARGACH.—“ Brave words, in sooth ! thou man of might !

How true I'll understand,  
When the Fenians I with vengeance smite,  
And meet thee hand to hand.”

OSCAR.—“ If to your hand you trust alone,  
And to the vigour of your arm,  
Not to some power to me unknown,  
To some infernal charm ;—  
I vow, great champion, ere we part,  
I'll sluice the life-blood in your heart.”

MEARGACH.—“ Brave words again ! but first me tell  
How Tale, my noble kinsman, fell.  
By whom his dear illustrious wife  
Was foully here bereft of life.”

FINN TO MEARGACH.—“ Before the valiant Tale was slain,  
A thousand warriors bit the plain,  
He dealt such deaths around ;  
And more were falling, till the spear  
Of Oscar checked his fierce career,  
And brought him to the ground ;  
Nobly they fought—great deeds were done,  
Tale fell—and victory crowned my son.”

MEARGACH.—“ But was it not a burning shame  
To slay his all-accomplished dame ?  
A princess rich in every charm  
That might a murderer's rage disarm.

FINN.—“ On none of all the Fenian race  
Falls, or can fall, such foul disgrace.  
Nor let it ever be denied—  
By her own act the princess died.  
When she beheld such heaps of dead  
All ghastly pale in their gory bed,

And Talc, her hero, midst the slain,  
Grief swelled and burst her heart in twain.

This we aver—and now in peace,  
Safe to your native land return;

Or if you wish not strife to cease,  
But still for vengeance burn,  
Here stands full many a Fenian chief,  
Whose trenchant blade may end your grief.  
Or if you single fight decline,  
Let both our hosts in battle line  
Meet face to face, and bravely try  
To gain the victory—or die.”

---

The latter proposal was most accordant with Meargach's desire of vengeance, and it was agreed that both armies should engage on the following day. One day, however, did not suffice to end the contest: the hosts fought for ten successive days; and on the last day Meargach fell by the hand of Oscar, and victory remained with the Fenians. The war, however, was not yet terminated. Meargach had two sons, one of whom, by name Ciardan, comes to avenge his father's death. Oscar's wounds prevented him from engaging in a fresh combat, but Mac Brodeen's son, Longadawn, met him and was slain, with 300 of the Fenian warriors. Gaul, who was always found most efficient in every extremity, met and slew Ciardan. Another champion of the enemy next advanced, in brilliant arms, and challenged the bravest of the Fenians to meet him. This was Liagan, Ciardan's brother. Two heroes, in succession, accepted the challenge, and both were slain. Notwithstanding his prowess, a third ventured to try his fortune against him: this was no other than the celebrated Conan-Maol, or the Bald, with some of whose "sayings and doings" the reader may be already acquainted, and whose exploits deserve to be recorded, not in vulgar prose, but in bardick song:—

Next, Conan to the conflict came—  
 Small love had he of honest fame;  
 And though of valour great his boast,  
 No man had less in all our host.  
 His heart, to fox and deer akin,  
 He lodged beneath a wolf-dog's skin,\*  
 And joined to craft, his favourite vice,  
 Buffoonery and cowardice.  
 When Liagan he beheld advance—  
 "Come on," he cries, "thou great Mac Trone!  
 Come—smell the odor of my lance.  
 But why not come alone?  
 When one meets one 'tis equal match,  
 But two to one is no fair scratch;  
 Therefore, my sweet and gentle sir,  
 Against your odds I must demur—  
 Dismiss your friend—do be so kind—  
 That follows like your shade behind.  
 Or, if a foe, you hazard more  
 From foe behind than foe before."  
 He said, when Liagan turned to spy  
 What friend or foe was following nigh.  
 Then crafty Conan's faulchion keen,  
 Swift as the lightning's flash,  
 The head swept from the shoulders clean,  
 With one puissant slash.  
 Erect the trunk a moment stood  
 Upspouting rivulets of blood;  
 Then prostrate fell, with such a sound  
 As shook the hills and woods around.†

---

The death of Liagan and victory of Conan did not end the strife. Other combats followed, till at last they

\* A dog in forehead, but in heart a deer."

† Thus in the ballad of Hardyknute, when "Bauld Thomas pierced a boaster's bairded cheek":—

"Swith on the harden'd clay he fell  
 Right far was heard the thud."

απαξῆσε δε τευχέ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ.



were suspended by the approach of Aile, a blooming queen, the wife of Meargach of the azure sword, and mother of Ciardan and Liagan. When she beheld her husband and sons cold in death, she burst forth into passionate lamentations, mingled with praises of their virtues, and doleful complaints that it was by treachery they were overcome. Grania, the wife of Finn, comes to console Aile, and assures her that they fell in fair combat, and that Finn was of too noble a nature ever to sanction treachery. As the hostile warriors were still in the field, she courteously asks Aile if she would wish to see a single combat, or would prefer an engagement between the two whole armies. Aile, "brighter than the sun," replied that she would rather behold a conflict between thirty warriors, on each side, contending for fame and victory. Accordingly the proposed number is selected from Aile's friends, and on the other side, "*thirty Fenians brave, who oft had cohorts nobly slain.*" They met, and fought till only three Fenian chiefs were left alive. Then Grania, thinking that Aile had witnessed enough of the superiority of the Fenians, admonished her to return home with the remnant of her host. But Aile, still thirsting for vengeance, declared she would never return till Finn had yielded, or every man of her host were slain. The trumpet sounded to the charge—

And such a dreadful fight I ween,  
As man encountered man,  
Was ne'er before in Erin seen,  
E'en since the world began.

Only three of Finn's enemies survived the battle, and they, with Aile their blooming queen, took to their ships and departed, but whither our record sayeth not. The hill on which the battle was fought was named the "Hill of Carnage," a name to which it was justly entitled—*Knockanaur—in the barony of Irraghtic Connor.*

## THE LAMENTATION OF AILE, THE BEAUTY OF BRIGHT ASPECT.

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IN *Barron's Magazine*, entitled "Ancient Ireland," published in Dublin, 1835, there is a copy of this poem in Irish, accompanied with an English prose translation, in an equal number of stanzas. Ala is there stated to be the wife of Morga, not of Meargach, of the azure sword; and "her lament is over her two sons and their father, who were killed in battle. Properly speaking, it is not a whole poem, but merely a portion of a long epic poem, of which it forms but one of the episodes. It is, however, perfect in itself, and quite fit to be published separately. In fact, the different parts of this epic poem have been preserved in this way, and are generally transcribed in separate pieces, and called by different names, according to the prominent character or subject of each piece. In the same manner we learn that the different books of the Iliad of Homer were for a long time detached and scattered separately, and so sung through the different provinces of Greece."—P. 103.

The Lay of Talc Mac Trone may be considered as consisting of several distinct parts. First, the Druid's observance of omens in the sky, and his fears of some approaching calamity; second, the approach of Talc Mac Trone and his conflict with Oscar; third, the coming of Meargach to avenge his death; fourth, the overthrow of Ciardan and Liagan, the two sons of Meargach; and finally, the "Lamentation of Aile" (or Ala) for the loss of her husband and her two sons. In *Barron's Magazine* (Dublin, 1835), the latter poem is said to be connected with Illan of Sora, as the persecutor of the lady who fled for protection to the Fenians. Moira Borb, in the lay bearing that title, was the son of Sora's king, who came on an enchanted steed in quest of his fair fugitive, and is not to be confounded with Talc, though in some respects the one lay has a marked resemblance to the other. A translated copy of Talc Mac Trone was kindly presented to the author many years ago by Mr. Owen O'Connellan, translator of Garraghty's Edition of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, Professor of Irish in Queen's College, Cork, a scholar to whom he takes this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging that he is under many similar obligations.

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ARGUMENT.—The Lay of Talc Mac Trone concludes with the Lamentation of Ala, in which she pathetically deplores the untimely fate of her husband and sons, of whose valour she held such high notions that she deemed them invincible in fair conflict. She, therefore, bitterly accuses Finn of having employed deceit and treachery to overcome them. In the opening apostrophe to Meargach, she says that he fell without a

wound, and not gloriously in battle. Too well had she anticipated his disastrous fate, from the various omens which preceded his departure, such as the appearance of armies passing in martial array through the dark glens of the sky, and the low moans of the spirit of the hills. She deplores the loss of all her past delights, and wishes for death to terminate her sorrow. Again she reflects on the past, and dwells with painful recollection on the numerous intimations she had received of her approaching calamity—as the ominous forgetfulness of his hounds and the sports of the chase—the crimson colour of the stream that rolled by her castle walls—the screams of the eagle—the withering of the neighbouring trees—the wailing of the hounds—her fearful visions, and particularly that one in which her tower seemed to have sunk into the earth, and a lake of blood to have risen in its place. All these signs too plainly indicated the calamitous fate of the friends she deplored.

---

O Meargach ! hero of the green sharp blade,  
Beneath thy arm fell many a gallant foe ;  
But now in dust inglorious art thou laid,  
Slain by no wound, but brought by treachery low.

For thee—by wiles o'ercome, not slaughtering glaive,  
For thee, thy wretched spouse pours bitter tears ;  
And for her sons—the beautiful, the brave,  
Who still were foremost in the strife of spears.

Far didst thou come across the roaring main,  
Far from the land of beauty and of bloom,  
In quest of glory from the Fenian train,  
To meet, by foul deceit, an early doom.

Too well I knew that danger dread was nigh,  
When cloud-borne legions camped on heaven's high way,  
When through the glens far winding up the sky,  
They led in marshalled files their long array.

By the low moans that swelled upon the wind,  
Poured by the spirit of the hills, I knew,  
Not distant far my sorrow I should find,  
The grief of griefs that darts my bosom through.

Too well I knew ill-omened was the day,  
That from my arms my blooming heroes tore ;  
By the red blood-drops on their cheeks that lay,  
That ne'er again should I behold them more.

Now bitter wo is mine—my shield ! my tower !  
All stricken down—all—all my joys are fled :  
Grief is my food—dark terrors round me lower,  
And sleepless sorrows hover o'er my head.

Since with my sons in death my husband lies,  
What now to me are beauty, riches, fame ?  
All joys, all glories, all that mortals prize,  
Fond mother, sire, and all of dearest name ?

A long and sad farewell to past delights,  
To bowers, to maidens, chiefs of noble race ;  
To games, to banquets, festive days and nights,  
The echoing hills, the soul-delighting chace.

Oh ! that some shaft would pierce my wo-worn heart,  
And with my warriors stretch me side by side ;  
Ne'er from them more, not e'en in death to part,  
Not e'en in death, loved hearts from hearts divide.

Don't you remember, when you stretched your sail  
And steered from home ? You'll ne'er return, I cried ;  
Oh ! ne'er approach the shores of Innisfail,  
Ne'er with the Fenians let your might be tried.

Each morn the raven's deep and hollow croak  
Prophetic told of some disaster nigh ;  
Your hounds forgetting, nought of them you spoke,  
But careless left in slips to howl and cry.

Red grew the foam upon the swelling flood,  
That rolls swift-rushing by the castle wall ;  
And as it crimsoned to the hue of blood,  
I saw, alas ! that you were doomed to fall.



When to our fort th' ill-boding eagle came,  
And round it flew in many an airy wheel,  
Clear I foresaw that on our sons of fame,  
Would fall the vengeance of devouring steel.

When the tree withered that beside us grew,  
'Twixt branch and leaf, till all its bloom was gone ;  
That soon your arm would feeble prove, I knew,  
Against the treacherous wiles of Cumhall's son.

The day you sailed, with many an anxious look,  
Your course I followed o'er the foamy brine ;  
Before your ship, high flight the raven took,  
That you would ne'er return a fatal sign.

Too well the mournful cry and lengthened wail  
Of your loved hounds, that rose with early morn ;  
Declared that never more, o'er hill and dale,  
The chace would you pursue with hound and horn.

My broken rest, my floods of scalding tears,  
Terrific visions in the dreary night,  
Sad omens—told mine were no idle fears,  
That your loved aspects ne'er would greet my sight.

Lonely I stood, forsaken and forlorn,  
A dismal spectre horrible to view,  
My head and arms seemed from my shoulders torn—  
Alas ! alas ! that vision proved too true.

Down sunk our tower, and in its place outspread  
A lake of blood, and then I knew too well,  
My heroes' life-blood was untimely shed,  
And that by Fenian treachery they fell.

# THE LAY

OF

## DEARG MAC DREITHEAL,

(DARGO THE SON OF TORCUL ?)

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IN the Catalogue of the Irish Books and Manuscripts of the Royal Irish Academy, there is a copy of this poem, entitled *LAOID AN DEIRG DANA*, i. e. *The Poem of the Bold Red*, which Mr. Eugene Curry, the learned Irish writer of that catalogue, says "is a Fenian poem of good antiquity, consisting of 370 verses." There is also another copy, "a fine Finian poem, entitled the poem of Derg son of Droithchill (Torcuil) consisting of 232 verses, by Fergus the son of Finn. It is written in very pure Irish." There is also a poem in Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities*, bearing the name of "Dargo the son of Druivel," evidently a corruption of the Irish title, and having few points of identity with the genuine Irish poem. In style it is an echo of Macpherson, with numerous ghosts, "virgin ghosts," and "sporting ghosts;" with a long address to the moon, to the *half*-wasted moon, and the *half*-appearance of the morning. It opens with "a sound which comes by *halves*" to the ear of the bard; and concludes with some sage reflections on the state of departed heroes, whose ghosts "meet in peace, and ride together on the tempest's wing. There Lochlin and Morven meet at the mutual feast, and listen together to the song of their bards."

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ARGUMENT.—The bard declares his intention to sing the exploits of Dargo, the eastern chief, who came to make a conquest of Erin; and commences by informing us that as two of the coast guards, Roinea and Caol, were at their post on the beach, they observed a galley approaching, on the deck of which stood a warrior, from whose arms and dress they concluded that he must be a formidable invader. Roinea expresses some fear, and Caol manfully replies that he fears no enemy on earth. The galley reaches the strand; the warrior springs ashore, clothed in shining mail; and on being accosted by the two young heroes, informs them that he is well known to fame, and is come to claim the sovereignty of Erin. Caol replies that Erin has many a warrior able and ready to frustrate all such pretensions, and on Dargo's saying that he wished to see one of them, Caol unsheathes his sword, and after a gallant fight,

is vanquished and bound. The same fate befalls his companion. Dargo proves himself to be a generous enemy, for he unbinds the two chiefs, but imposes on them a vow not to wield a sword against him for a year. He then proceeds with his two captives to Tara, where he is asked his object in coming to Erin. He answers as before, and on being checked for such presumption, challenges a hundred to fight. He conquers, and binds them all. Cormac, in alarm, despatches a herald for Finn, who arrives with his host of 3,000 men. Dargo still proves victorious, and, after a severe struggle with Fillan, overcomes and binds him. Cormac then calls on Gaul, the son of Morni, to take the field, and promises a large reward for his services. Gaul forgives the wrongs he had suffered from Cormac, buckles on his arms, and, after a long and well-contested conflict, slays his antagonist.

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## I.

The high achievements I unfold  
Of Dargo—champion great and bold,  
Who came, with potent hand,  
From where the fair-haired warriors bide,  
And crossed the deep resounding tide  
To Erin's lovely land.  
As he launched his galley on the main,  
He sung, in loud exultant strain,  
That homeward he ne'er would the billows plow,  
Till he made the Fenian heroes bow.

## II.

On Erin's shore two warriors good,  
From foreign foes to guard it, stood,  
Young Roinea of the seas;  
And Caol, Neifin's son the strong;  
Each grasped too lances tough and long,  
And shook them in the breeze.  
When, bounding on the wat'ry way,  
They spy, in starry red array,  
High on the galley's side,  
The chief, and nearer as he drew,  
Still growing larger to the view,  
In all his glittering pride.

## III.

ROINEA.—“ If that be he of far-spread fame,  
 Who roves along from coast to coast,  
 The slayer bold of many a host,  
 Who Erin comes to claim,  
 As sure as here he speeds his way,  
 To us he brings a fateful day.”\*

CAOL.—“ On let him come! small care to me  
 Whoe’er the haughty champion be,  
 For while this good ash spear I wield,  
 I dread no foe by flood or field.”

ROINEA.—“ May deeds, my brave heroic friend,  
 Upon your valiant speech attend!  
 I’ll own, when these prevail,  
 And prostrate by your shining blade,  
 The warrior of the seas is laid,  
 You tell no idle tale.”

## IV.

The friends sat with impatience high  
 Long by the silvery foaming deep—  
 But ere they closed their eyes in sleep,  
 The sea-king’s bark was nigh.  
 On the staff of his spear, with an agile bound,  
 He sprang from her prow to the wave-washed ground  
 And high across the glistening sand  
 He drew his gallant ship to land.

## V.

On his lofty brow thick-clustering rolled  
 His locks like crisped and curling gold!†  
 Of the morning’s orient hue,

\* *Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus.*

† “ The hair was an essential ornament of the free Celtic warriors ; for which reason Clovis got the name of *Chevelu*, as then ruling over a free



Was the ruddy glow of his manly cheek,  
 And his sparkling eyes, that seemed to speak,  
     Were gems of the darkest blue.  
 Such portly frame, such strength of limb,  
     In open battle plain,  
 Of hundred warriors stern and grim,  
     The onset could sustain.  
 With proud defiance in his look,  
 Two massy spears in hands he shook :  
 His shield was o'er his shoulder hung ;  
 Beneath a ponderous claymore swung,  
 That oft in conflicts long and rude,  
 Had down the steel-clad warriors hewed.  
 With many a rare and precious stone  
 His jewelled helm bright-sparkling shone ;  
 And o'er the strand, with a warrior's stride,  
 Marched the Prince of the eastern world in pride.

## VI.

His arms young Roinea braced more tight ;  
     While Caol grasped his spear—  
 And to the haughty sea-borne knight,  
     With rapid step drew near,  
 And cried—"adventurous chief declare  
 Your lineage, with the name you bear,  
     And what the native land you boast,  
 In us two Fenian chiefs you see,  
 The sons of lords of high degree,  
     Two guardians of the coast."

people. In Ireland he could not appear in arms, nor was he permitted to appear candidate for any employment in the state who wanted his hair. The celebrated Cucullin, being foiled in single combat, his adversary cut off his hair, as a further reproach to a knight who had *falsified* his word ; and we are told he remained concealed for nearly a year, till his hair grew again. Cormac in the third century, when he became candidate for the monarchy, his hair was intentionally burned at a public entertainment, and he, for that time, was obliged to relinquish his claim."—*Note to the Ode of Goll., Trans. R. I. A., vol. ii.*—See also WALKER'S *Hist. Essay on the Irish Dress*, p. 11.

DARGO.—“The eastern world from which I came,  
O chiefs, is not unknown to fame,  
And not unknown am I.  
Son of the fair-haired nation's king,  
To Erin's shores I conquest bring,  
And claim her sovereignty.”

## VII.

“A lofty claim! thou warrior bold,”  
In scorn said Neifin's son;  
“Rule thou shalt ne'er in Erin hold,  
While breezes blow—or waters run.”

DARGO.—“Tho' champions two ye boldly stand,  
Tho' great in arms your skill,  
Who shall prevent this conquering hand  
To seize—to hold green Erin's land,  
And rule her as I will?”

CAOL.—“Though we should yield—know Erin boasts  
Full many a champion in her hosts,  
Who, by the strife-deciding sword,  
Would teach thee homage to her lord.”

DARGO.—“One would I see—who dares with me  
A brief encounter try,  
This trenchant steel, will make him reel”——  
“That one behold am I”——  
Cried Caol, as his sword he drew,  
And on the sea-borne warrior flew.

## VIII.

Now fierce in fight both warriors burned,  
And blow for blow was quick returned.  
Aloud re-echoed o'er the field  
The stricken mail and the sounding shield;  
Till each the other round the waist,  
With a giant's iron grasp embraced.

And they tugged and strove with strength and art,  
With sinewy limb and unquailing heart;  
And fierce and fiercer the combat grew,  
Till Dargo in ire his foeman threw,  
With a rattling clash on the blood-stained ground,  
And fast in the captive's fetters bound.

## IX.

With grief and fury deeply stung  
To see the foe prevail,  
Young Roinea fearless forward sprung,  
The victor to assail.  
Then many an active feat was done  
To thrust—to ward—to strike—to shun—  
Till Dargo, by his dextrous play,  
Tripped Roinea to the ground;  
Reft all his shining arms away,  
And fast in fetters bound.

## X.

The captives cried—“’tis a glorious deed—  
And glory great shall be your meed;  
Two warriors to have tied!  
High-minded chief, O loose our chain,  
And let us follow in your train,  
Where’er you rove or bide.”  
Then Dargo, ever generous found,  
The fetters of the chiefs unbound;  
And a solemn vow for a year they made  
Against him not to unsheath a blade.

## XI.

Away is Dreitheal’s victor son  
To Teamor with his captives gone;  
That house of royal state,  
With many a brown silk banner hung,  
Where counsellor sage, and life-guard young,  
Round high-born Cormac wait.

CORMAC.—“ No sword unsheath, ye warriors strong,  
Nor from the stranger dread a wrong.”

Uprose the courtiers, one and all,  
To greet him in the council hall;  
Then to a seat of honour led;  
When thus the good king Cormac said,—  
“ Fair chieftain, we would know the cause,  
That thus thy steps to Teamor draws.”

“ I come, great king, to seek renown—  
In this fair isle to win a crown,  
That shall be called my own;  
And by my sword the first, last, best,  
Of monarch's pleas,\* my right attest  
To sit on Erin's throne.”

“ Such thoughts presumptuous, mad and vain,  
Have powerful lords beyond the main  
Oft harboured in their soul;  
But Erin, while she owns a son—  
Or while her life-blood's channels run,  
Shall stranger ne'er control.”

“ Since my demands, you thus despise,  
O monarch,” Dargo thus replies,  
“ I dare a hundred to the fight,  
Opposed against my single might.”

## XII.

A hundred warriors rose  
At Cormac's potent word;  
Loud rung the storm of blows,  
And sword encountered sword.  
More warm, more fierce, the combat grew;  
Man heaped on man the chief o'erthrew,

\* *Ultima ratio regum.*



Till all the hundred down he cast,  
And tied in binding cordage fast;  
Two hundred more, the truth to tell,  
Beneath his conquering weapons fell.

## XIII.

When Teamor's king such wond'rous deeds  
Beheld—amazed—away  
For Finn, a herald swift he speeds—  
And for his armed array.  
Next morn, behold! with early dawn,  
Three thousand warriors cross the lawn,  
In bright and shining armour drest,  
With burnished shield and nodding crest;  
All men of might—all men of fame,  
That never met reproach or shame.

## XIV.

The march, with joy did Cormac hear  
Of the host from Almhuin's plain,  
And welcomed with a gladsome cheer  
Mac Morni's gallant train.  
And said, "the fair-haired nation's son,  
Since to our land he came,  
Three thousand agile feats has done,  
Our wonder and our shame."—  
Then Finn, the sea-borne chief addrest—  
"Proud are the thoughts that rule thy breast,  
But though thy strength be great, and bold  
Thy heart, O prince of th' eastern land,  
Here shalt thou no dominion hold,  
While we can wield a brand."  
"If thus your counsels have decreed,  
Ye chiefs of royal line,"  
Cried Dargo—"Arm for fight with speed;  
To conquer or to die be mine."

## XV.

Three hundred men that none might scorn,  
Of Erin's host, to conflict bred,  
By hardy Dun, and valiant Dorn,  
And Con, the son of Conan, led,  
To battle marched in evil hour;  
For vain their valour, vain their power.  
O'er Conan's son his kindred mourned,  
And Dorn to Teamor ne'er returned.  
With arms so strong, with deeds so high,  
The champion crowned his victory.

## XVI.

With vengeance burned young Fillan's breast—  
He girded close his battle-vest,  
'Twas not of satin sleek;  
And went with hope the foe to tame,  
To vindicate his country's fame;  
Alas! his wo to seek.  
With points of steel they parried and thrust,  
Till the sweat and blood ran conglobed in the dust,  
And they struck the mail with such shivering stroke,  
That their blades in glittering fragments broke.  
Then each, round the waist, the other clasped,  
With sinewy strength they tugged and grasped;  
With foot and knee, with shoulder and head,  
They strove, and the ground shook beneath their tread,  
Till Dargo, his conquering arm beneath,  
Had Fillan laid prostrate on the heath;  
And, maugre his art and his nimble foils,  
Bound fast in the links of his iron toils.

## XVII.

CORMAC.—“ Rise! son of Morni, rise!”  
The monarch cried in haste—  
“ Us rescue from the pest that flies  
Our kingdom to lay waste—

This foreign foe, whose potent hand  
Not e'en the bravest can withstand.  
Third of the harbour dues, behold  
I give, and of the purest gold  
Four hundred ounces three times told.  
Then go, as thou hast gone before,  
And bring back victory once more! "

GAUL.—" Tho' still I feel as if a dart,  
From friendly hand, had pierced my heart,  
To think that e'er beneath thy reign,  
In rash inglorious fray,  
By mutual wounds, in heaps of slain,  
Our noble Fenians lay:  
Yet, in this hour of just alarm,  
Monarch, to thee I lend my arm."

CORMAC.—" Great Gaul, of weapons keen and strong,  
Let past misfortunes rest—  
No season to remember wrong  
When war is at the breast."

## XVIII.

Soon Morni's son, in burnished steel,  
His limbs arrayed from crown to heel;  
He grasped his weapon sharp and good,  
And straight before his foeman stood.  
By recent victory grown vain,  
With step and smile of proud disdain,  
His claymore Dargo raised;—  
No time for parl—in fateful strife—  
For fame, for victory, and life,  
The combat fiercely blazed.  
For five long days the fight they wage;  
And such the din of the battle's rage,  
As might, in breathless silence deep,  
The warrior hosts of Erin keep;  
To hear, loud-sounding o'er the field,  
The crashing spear—the splintering shield,

And the helmet smashed beneath the glaive  
Of Ollain\* and Dargo madly brave;  
'Till low the white-toothed youth was laid,  
By the great Mac Morni's trenchant blade.

\* The name (*prænomen*) of Gaul.



# THE LAY

OF THE

## COMBAT OF CONN, SON OF DARGO,

AND

## GAUL, SON OF MORNI.

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THE original of this poem, with a translation into English, may be seen in the 1st vol. of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. In Smith's "Gaelic Antiquities" there is also a poem entitled Con,\* the Son of Dargo; but, as Dr. Young has observed—"The entire story is so altered, that nothing remains in common with the original but the names." The first four lines in Dr. Young's copy are thus literally rendered:—"The tale of Con, son of Dargo, who, filled with heavy wrath, went to revenge his innocent father on the Chiefs of Ireland."—*Na Eirion*. "Mr. Smith has perverted this passage, in order to deprive Ireland of the honor, *si qua est ea gloria*, of being the residence of Fingal's heroes." A similar perversion occurs of various other passages, both in this and many of the Fenian poems beside, for the same purpose, and to favour Macpherson's falsifications of Irish history.

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ARGUMENT.—The bard commences his lay by saying that he is going to sing of Conn, who came to avenge his father's death. He is encouraged to proceed by a complimentary address from Patrick. He then says that Conn, who, from the summit of a hill, had been overlooking the camp of the Fenians, came rushing down upon them, impetuous as an eagle on a flock of birds, and filled them with dismay. He is described as a most valiant and gorgeously apparelled warrior, but breathing vengeance, and demanding retribution for his wrongs. Fergus is immediately despatched to ask the cause of his coming in such a hostile attitude, and he answers, to avenge his father's death, by the death of the principal leaders of the Fenians. Five hundred warriors are sent to oppose him, and he vanquishes them all. Seven score men of tried courage are then sent against him, but they are equally unsuccessful. Conan

\* The word Conn, according to Smith, is a contraction of *Cu-thonn*—"the voice of the waves." Might it not be rendered more significantly the "*hound of the waves*?"—a sea-reaver, or pirate.

then proposes to meet him in single combat; and, in despite of the Fenians, who rebuke his presumption, takes the field; but Conn, disdain-  
ing to combat with so worthless an antagonist, instead of meeting him, sword in hand, lashes him with the scabbard, and sends him back, shrieking with terror, to the Fenians, who are well pleased to see him so justly handled. Finn then invokes Gaul to be their champion; and he, though still remembering past wrongs, generously complies with Finn's request, and, after a long and well-contested battle, in which he receives many wounds, remains victorious. To mitigate his pains, while under his leache's care, he has recourse to the songs of the bards, whom his praises and gifts richly remunerate; but Finn continued for a long time to lament the loss of his Fenians—a loss for which no victory could compensate.

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## I.

OSSIAN.—My song is now the tale of Conn,  
The blameless Dargo's noble son,  
Who came with grief of heart oppressed,  
And marshal fury in his breast,  
On Erin's chiefs to wreak his ire,  
In vengeance of his slaughtered sire.

PATRICK.—O thou of pleasant tales, rehearse,  
With music's voice, in sounding verse,  
The tale of noble Conn.  
What chief more beautiful or brave,  
E'er lifted shield or handled glaive,  
Than Dargo's noble son?

## II.

OSSIAN.—High on a hill, our camp before,  
The champion sat, and scanned us o'er,  
Till starting up in wrathful flame,  
With swoop impetuous down he came,  
An eagle from the cloud.  
At first we felt some cold affright,  
To see him rushing in his might,  
In glorious beauty proud.

For none of all his hostile race,  
Could match with Conn in manly grace.  
His cheeks bloomed ruddy as the hue  
That gilds the red-veined polished yew ;  
His rolling eyes bright-sparkling shone ;  
His locks were o'er his shoulders thrown,  
And down in curling ringlets rolled  
Like twisted threads of well-wrought gold.  
His venom'd dagger—to the foe,  
In combat close, a deadly wo,  
And claymore that he well could wield,  
Hung by the side of his bossy shield.  
Such his high courage, skill, and might,  
Victor he proved in every fight.  
As on he rushed, new fears he woke,  
For haughty were the words he spoke  
Of tribute, taxes, spoil, and prey.  
In sooth, though shameful 'tis to say,  
Such terrors ne'er, O sage, I own,  
Were to our fear-struck Fenians known,  
As when they saw, in furious mood,  
Down rushing like a torrent flood,  
Th' impetuous Conn, to glut his ire,  
In vengeance for his slaughtered sire.

## III.

As Finn's brave son advised, we sent,  
To learn the hero's dark intent,  
A herald good and wise,  
The sweet-tongued Fergus, skilled to greet,  
With courteous phrase, and gesture meet,  
Proud chiefs in hostile guise.

FERGUS.—“ Great warrior prince, whose arms and gait  
Declare thee lord of high estate,  
To me great Finn deutes the task,  
Of thee, in terms of peace, to ask

The cause that, with a martial host,  
Has brought thee here to Erin's coast."\*

CONN.—To thee, O Fergus, will I tell  
The cause in brief, and then, farewell.  
I for my father slain, demand  
Just vengeance of the Fenian band—  
The head of Finn—of valiant Gaul—  
Of Crimthan—of the noble Art—  
And of the tribe of Morni all—  
From Cormac too the head must part—  
And Erin's sons from sea to sea,  
Must own no lord, but only me;  
Or early with the morning light  
Five hundred meet me in the fight.

## IV.

"What tidings, Fergus, dost thou bear?"  
Said Finn, our princely chief—"Declare  
The warrior's plaint—and what his will—  
Nor aught conceal, though fraught with ill."

FERGUS.—"Five hundred in the desperate fight  
The chief demands with morning light."

Then spoke five hundred of our host:  
"To-morrow shall he cease to boast."  
But vain their high resolves—and vain  
Their glorious deeds on battle plain;  
Five hundred by th' unsparing blade  
Of Dargo's son were prostrate laid,

\* Fingal and his heroes are here expressly attributed to Ireland; but the line is altered into the following, in the Perth edition:—'*For what cause have you come to this country?*' the word *tir* being substituted for *Eirion*. Conn, in his reply, says, 'to revenge my father on the noble Fians of Ireland;' but, for the reason already mentioned, these words are changed into 'the nobles and great chieftains.' And in a subsequent passage, where the word *Eirion*, 'Ireland,' occurs, the reading is altered to *an tir uile*, 'the whole land!'"—Dr. Young's Essay in the first vol. of Trans. of the Royal Irish Academy.



And had there been five hundred more,  
They too had weltered in their gore.  
Conn single-handed won the field,  
And proudly struck his sounding shield,  
His triumph loud to tell.  
Then seven score men of valour tried,  
We chose in hope his boastful pride  
And arrogance to quell.

## V.

Now chafing hot in rage and grief  
Might you behold the Fenian chief;  
While furious Conn rushed on, and spread  
The battle field with heaps of dead,  
As rushes hungry hawk among  
A flock of little birds of song.  
In rout and ruin all was thrown,  
Midst many a shout and many a groan.  
There lay dismembered many a limb,  
And many a visage pale and grim,  
And many a head and headless trunk,  
In undistinguished carnage sunk.  
In deepest wo, we saw them all—  
Our seven score gallant warriors fall.

## VI.

Then Morni's son, bald Conan, spoke—  
“Let me the contest try;  
By my avenging stroke,  
This furious Conn shall die;  
My hand alone shall cleave him down,  
And rip him up from heel to crown.”  
“Bald Conan,” noble Oscar cried,  
“Thou boaster void of sense,  
Ne'er wilt thou lay aside  
This brainless insolence?  
'Twill ne'er be thine, in war's dread game,  
O'er Conn a victory to claim.”

But in the Fians' strong despite,  
Rash Conan went to prove his might,  
By mad presumption borne;  
When Conn, of graceful form, beheld  
A wight so worthless take the field,  
He smiled in haughty scorn;  
Nor deigned to meet him in the strife,  
Nor take the braggart Conan's life.  
But when he shook his good steel blade,  
The craven shrunk away dismayed;  
And fled—while rapid Conn pursued,  
And thrashed him with the scabbard rude.  
On shoulders, back, and hairless crown,  
The thwacks like flail-strokes rattled down,  
And many a shriek, and many a groan,  
And many a doleful cry, made known  
The anguish he was doomed to feel,  
Till Conn had bound him neck and heel.  
“Thanks to that scourging hand are due,”  
Well pleased our chieftain said,  
“Thou, Conan, mayst thy folly rue,  
For sadly hast thou sped.”

## VII.

In council now, o'ercast with grief,  
The Fenian leaders met their chief.

FINN.—“Illustrious Gaul! whom none exceeds  
In prudent thoughts and warlike deeds,  
To you, I ween, the task belongs  
Now boldly to avenge our wrongs;  
To stay the vengeance raging wide,  
And tame yon haughty warrior's pride.  
As once from well-fought battle-field,  
Away the father's head you bore;  
So now the son compel to yield,  
And emulate your deeds of yore.”

GAUL.—“Thy voice so soothing, soft and bland,  
O prince, my services command.  
In this our sad disastrous day,  
All enmity be cast away;  
Join hand to hand—and heart to heart,  
In friendship for the common weal:  
Most skilful, noble Finn, thou art,  
The wounds of hostile minds to heal.  
Great chieftain of the Fenian line,  
I and my warriors’ strength are thine.”

## VIII.

Then in his frame’s collected power,  
Strode Gaul, a moving stately tower,  
Before the host. A cheerful glow  
Of healthful hope-inspiring red,  
As forth he marched to meet the foe,  
O’er his dilating visage spread.  
Him, all admiring gazed upon,  
So beautiful in arms he shone.  
With corslet blazing on his breast,  
With sun-like shield and meteor crest.  
When to the foe he drew more nigh,  
Bright flashed the lightning of his eye:  
Might none, with heart unquailing, brook  
His stern grim smile and withering look,  
And, as he whirled his beaming blade,  
The eastern warriors bold  
Shrunk back into their ranks dismayed,  
And felt their blood run cold.  
E’en Conn, a moment, seemed to fear—  
For ne’er, in all his war-career,  
Till now such champion had he seen,  
Of such a proud heroic mein,  
So formed a battle-charge to lead,  
Where thousands fierce in conflict bleed.  
But yet with hope of glory filled,  
To meet such foe his bosom thrilled;

'Twere glorious to contend with Gaul !  
Glorious, e'en by his hand to fall !  
But oh ! more glorious far to tell,  
By Dargo's son Mac Morni fell !

Such thoughts revolving in his breast,  
Him Gaul approached, and thus address :  
" Great warrior ! could thy eastern home  
No grave to thee afford,  
That hither far o'er ocean's foam,  
You come with fire and sword ?  
Your dreams of conquest now are past—  
Here shall you find a tomb at last.  
Your cairn upon the mountain heath,  
To future times will show  
That here, Mac Morni's hand beneath,  
You laid your glories low."

CONN.—" Illustrious chieftain ! deeds, not words,  
Must tell the fortune of our swords.  
This shaft, perchance, may answer give,  
And tell thee, Gaul, that yet I live."

This said—Conn flung his brandished spear—  
Close whizzing by Mac Morni's ear  
The weapon flew, with erring aim,  
But kindled an avenging flame  
In Gaul, who rapid onward prest,  
To meet the foeman breast to breast.  
They met as meet two scythe-armed cars,  
Two meteor globes, or blazing stars,  
Recoiling each, with such a shock,  
As ships recoil from stricken rock.  
Again they meet—again they close,  
Their bossy shields resound :  
Sword rings on sword—blows answer blows,  
Their conflict shakes the ground.  
Apart the Fenians listening stood,  
And saw the chiefs, in furious mood,  
Their ancient strife renew ;



For each the past remembered well ;  
 Heavy and quick their weapons fell,  
 And fierce the combat grew.  
 O'er their helmed heads, in many a gyre,  
 The red sparks flew—and showers of fire  
 Ran from their arms, and showers of blood\*  
 Poured from their limbs a crimson flood ;  
 And from each hacked and battered shield  
 Dense showers of splinters strewed the field.

## IX.

Long, long, with equal skill and strength,  
 Both warriors fought, until at length  
 Great Gaul, to end the strife,  
 Down struck, by one puissant blow,  
 The dauntless son of Dargo low,  
 And reft away his life.  
 From Finn and all the Fenian host  
 Rose shouts of triumph, vaunt and boast,  
 To see the great Mac Morni stand  
 O'er the fallen prince of the Eastern land,

\* In the original Irish, each of three successive lines commence with the word *Cith*, which signifies *showers*. In Dr. Young's translation the force or beauty of the repetition is lost by rendering it *streams* twice, and *showers* only once.

Thus Percy and Douglas meet and fight in Chevy Chase :—

“ At last these two stout earls did meet  
 Like captains of great might ;  
 Like lions moved they laid on load,  
 And made a cruel fight.

“ They fought until they both did sweat,  
 With swords of tempered steel,  
 Until the blood like drops of rain,  
 They trickling down did feel.”

In the battle of Otterburne :—

“ The Percy and the Douglas mette,  
 That either of other was faine,  
 They swapped together, whille that they swatte,  
 With swords of ffyne Collayne :  
 Till the bloode from the bassonets ranne  
 As the rocke doth in the rayne.”

Or, as in the original copy :—

“ Tyll the bloode outt off thear basnetes sprente  
 As ever dyd heal or rayne.”

And wave his<sup>o</sup> reddened faulchion high,  
 To tell his glorious victory.  
 Now Conan bald was seen to smile,  
 Avenged of his dishonour vile;  
 And far and wide, with loud acclaim,  
 The echoes spread Mac Morni's fame.

## X.

Nine weary nights, his wounds to cure,  
 Did Gaul the leache's care endure,  
 But charmed with song his pains away,  
 With song by night, with song by day.  
 With praises high and rich rewards,  
 Repaid he well the skilful bards.

Five hundred of the Fenian host  
 Were to our ranks for ever lost.  
 And seven score warriors strong and brave,  
 By Dargo's son found a bloody grave;  
 A loss that ne'er could be restored:  
 By Finn in sorrow long deplored.

# THE LAY

OF

## CONLOCH, SON OF CUCHULLIN.

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SYLVESTER O'HALLORAN, in the introductory discourse to the poem of Conloch, published by Miss Brooke, informs us, "that in the reign of Conor Mac-Nessa, king of Ulster, about the year of the world 3950, Ireland abounded in heroes of the most shining intrepidity; insomuch that they were all over Europe, by way of eminence, called THE HEROES OF THE WESTERN ISLE. Amongst these were Cuchullin, Conall Cearnach, and the three sons of Uisneach, all cousins-german." In a literal translation of Keating's *History of Ireland*, printed in Dublin in 1811, we have the following account of Cuchullin and the death of his son Conloch:—"Cuchullin went to study feats of valour under Scaha, an heroine who resided in Albin (in the Isle of Sky). There was a beautiful young lady named Aifa, who fell violently in love with him, and, after a short intimacy, she proved with child. Cuchullin being about to return to Ireland, presented Aifa with a chain of gold, charging her to keep it till her son arrived at man's estate, then to send the youth to him with it as a certain token by which he should know him, and to lay him under three injunctions—the first, never to give way to any hero or champion; the second, not to confess his name through fear; and third, never to refuse a challenge. The young man, having completed his education, sets out for Ireland to see his father. On his arrival he finds Conor and the nobles of Ulster in convention at TRACHT EISI. Conor sends one of his soldiers, named Cunnery, to inquire who he is; who, approaching the youth, demands his name. 'I tell not my name to any single warrior on the face of the earth,' says Conloch. Cuchullin then went, but receiving only the same answer, a bloody encounter ensued, and Conloch was overcoming Cuchullin, so that although his prowess and valour were great and conspicuous in all his former combats, he was obliged to take refuge in an adjacent ford, and call to Lay, son of Rian of Gavra, for his spear, with which he pierced Conloch through the body and killed him."

O'Halloran says that when Cuchullin left his three injunctions with Aife, "he was far from expecting that his son should have put them in force upon his arrival in Ireland. On the contrary, it appears (from the poem) the effect of jealousy in the lady, and of revenge, hoping that Cuchullin (now advanced in years) might himself fall in the conflict; for, though a gallant knight, yet our history proves that he was by no means constant in his attachments to the fair."

"As to the number of knights engaged and vanquished by Conloch pre-

vicious to his conflict with Cuchullin, it is all poetic fiction, to raise the character of the two heroes. Even Conall Cearnach, master of the Ulster knights, is made to submit to Conloch, who then falls the greater victim to the glory of his own father."

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ARGUMENT.—The Lay commences by informing the reader of Conloch's arrival in Erin, as an armed warrior. On his coming to a certain pass or bridge, he is accosted by the king's officer demanding the eric or tribute which was required from all before they were permitted to pass. Conloch indignantly refuses to pay, and resolves to gain a free passage by his sword. In pursuance of this design, he overcomes and binds a hundred of the armed men who came to enforce compliance. King Conor then asks if he has no chief able to meet this formidable stranger, and compel him to tell his name and country. Connal Cearnach, master of the Ulster knights, undertakes the task—is vanquished and bound. Conor instantly despatches a messenger for Cuchullin, desiring him to come to his assistance with all speed. Cuchullin arrives, and, after some expostulation with the monarch on account of past wrongs, goes forth to meet the knight, who had caused so much dismay. He is greatly struck by the noble appearance of the young warrior, and, as if he had some instinctive feeling of consanguinity, accosts him courteously, proffers friendship, and concludes by kindly entreating him to make the required disclosure. Conloch replies that he is forbidden by a vow; but were it not for that obstacle, there lived no man to whom he would more cheerfully tell his name and history. Cuchullin is obliged to exact compliance by the sword—a conflict ensues—and Conloch falls mortally wounded. Cuchullin laments his fate, and entreats him, before he expires, to grant his request. Conloch then informs him that he is his own son by Aife, who, from jealousy and resentment, instigated and bound him by a vow, to meet his father in deadly conflict. Each of the unhappy combatants vents his wrath on Aife for her inhuman conduct. Conloch declares that, in the contest, he purposely avoided his father's life by giving a wrong direction to his weapon. The Lay ends with the pathetic lamentation of Cuchullin.

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## I.

O'ER the hoarse-resounding tide,  
Conloch, youthful heart of pride,  
Clad in arms, in quest of fame,  
From Dunskey to Erin came.



HERALD.—Welcome ! warrior young and brave ;  
Welcome o'er the eastern wave ;  
Round green Erin's shores, I ween,  
Various have your wanderings been—  
Cease they now, until your hand  
Pay the dues our laws demand ;  
Tribute just that all must pay,  
O'er this bridge to smooth their way.  
Alba's warriors rashly bold,  
Who denied the custom-gold,  
And their swords too-daring drew—  
Them our stronger chieftains slew.  
May we heap no cairn to tell  
That here a youthful hero fell !

CONLOCH.—“ If, O herald, such your law,  
In by-gone days of peace ;  
My trusty claymore now I draw,  
And bid the impost cease.  
This good steel blade will smooth my way,  
All tribute, toll, and impost pay ;  
E'en from this hour, for all with me,  
Till noon-day of eternity.”

He said—and with his brandished blade,  
On Erin's sons fierce onslaught made,  
Rushing, as hungry hawk among  
A flock of fluttering birds of song,  
With fixed resolve, and martial skill,  
To break, to scatter, wound, and kill,  
And, through their densest armed array,  
To cut by force his crimson way.

His arm might none withstand !  
Soon five score warriors had he tied  
In galling thongs of tough bull-hide ;  
Reproach to all the land !  
That by a youth of name unknown,  
Our laws were spurned—our chiefs o'erthrown !

## II.

When royal Connor heard the tale,  
 In ire aloud he cried :  
 “ What warrior bold of Innisfail,  
 Will quell the stranger’s pride,  
 Compel him to declare his name,  
 His lineage what—and whence he came ? ”

Connal, chief of potent hand,  
 Went submission to demand—  
 Went—but no renown to gain—  
 Went to wear the victor’s chain.  
 Great the conflict—fierce and long—  
 Till with fractured sword and shield,  
 Down he sunk upon the field,  
 And felt the girding thong.

## III.

Cried indignant Ulladh’s king,  
 “ Haste ! the great Cuchullin bring  
 From Dundalgan’s\* sunny bower,  
 Or from Dethin’s stately tower.”

CONNOR.—“ Welcome, warrior !—Yet too slow  
 Haste your steps to meet the foe ;  
 By his vengeance, on the ground,  
 Lie a hundred warriors bound ;  
 Like steed impatient of the reins,  
 Connal Cearnach frets in chains.”  
 “ Since the brave by falsehood died,”†  
 Stern Cuchullin thus replied,  
 “ Where shall Erin’s warriors run ?  
 Where—the binding thong to shun ?

\* “Dundalgan, now Dundalk, the residence of Cuchullin. Dun Dethin, the residence of Dethin, the mother of Cuchullin.”

† “Cuchullin here alludes to the death of his kinsmen, the three sons of Uisneach, who were cut off some time before by the perfidy of Connor.”—*Miss Brooke.*

If the mighty Connal fail,  
Can an arm like mine prevail?"

CONNOR.—“ Chief of blades, of matchless might,  
Thou who ne’er hast shunned a foe,  
Wouldst thou then decline the fight?  
See thy friend, thy Connal, low,  
Him who taught thy tender age  
Where to guide the battle’s rage.”

## IV.

Then Cuchullin, dauntless chief,  
Stung by mingled shame and grief;  
Shame and grief to think his friend  
To a stranger’s arm should bend,  
And bound in fetters lie;  
Advanced the champion to behold  
Of whom such wondrous deeds were told,  
And learn his name or die.  
As on the youth he fixed his gaze,  
And scanned him o’er with fond amaze,  
Strange feelings, never felt before,  
He knew not whence, perplexed him sore;  
For ne’er such champion had he seen,  
Of such majestic port and mien,  
In arms so passing fair.  
“ Brave knight,” he cried, “ whose form and face  
Proclaim thee born of generous race,  
To me thy name declare.  
Enough for glory hast thou done,  
Rejoice in all thy victories won,  
Nor dream that envious tongue malign  
Will e’er defame those deeds of thine,  
Or say that from ignoble fear  
You dared not meet Cuchullin’s spear.  
Most gladly to a chief like thee  
Do I this hand extend;  
Accept the pledge of amity  
And meet me as thy friend.

But oh ! reveal thy rank and name,  
And what the region whence you came."

CONLOCH.—" My name and tale to Erin's shore,  
Illustrious chief, no vessel bore.

Yet freely let me own,  
Did knighthood's sacred claims allow—  
Did honour's laws permit—I vow,  
That unto thee alone  
Of all the warriors under heaven,  
Most promptly should my name be given."\*

V.

In conflict then the warriors close,  
And from each stricken shield  
Aloud resounds the storm of blows,  
And neither chief would yield,  
Until, the contest to decide,  
Stern Cuchullin's angered steel  
Pierced the youthful warrior's side,  
And made him backward reel—  
As forth outsprung the crimson gore,  
Fainting he sunk—to rise no more.

CUCHULLIN.—" Thou noble youth ! that fatal stroke  
I rue, alas ! too late !  
Why didst thou thus the strife provoke ?  
Oh ! worthy better fate.  
Now, ere in death thy limbs grow cold,  
Thy tale rehearse—too long untold—  
That pillar-rock and Ogham stone,  
To future times may make it known ;  
And Erin's bards, in song proclaim  
Thy race, thy glory, and thy name."

\* " To tell one's name to an enemy was reckoned in those days of heroism, a manifest evasion of fighting him ; for if it was once known, that friendship subsisted, of old, between the ancestors of the combatants, the battle immediately ceased ; and the ancient amity of their forefathers was renewed. *A man who tells his name to his enemy, was of old an ignominious term for a coward.*"—MACPHERSON'S *Ossian*, I, p. 71.



CONLOCH.—“ Prone to earth—O let me fall—

Near me come—and ere I die—

Thee my father let me call—

Conloch—thy son—am I.

Oh ! approach that Innisfail,

Seeing, may record the tale

How in glory's noble strife,

I forbore a father's life.

See in me Dundalgan's heir,

Son of Aife—false as fair—

Conloch—come his claims to prove—

Secret, in the womb of love,

Left, when first to Dunskaith's shore,

You went to learn the warrior's lore.”

CUCHULLIN.—“ Thy mother ! O my son ! my son !

Had she been here when strife arose,

Ne'er had this fatal deed been done,

Ne'er had we met as foes ;

Nor wouldst thou now death-stricken lie,

To wring her soul with agony.”

CONLOCH.—“ My mother ! oh ! be her's the blame,

The grief, the misery, the shame—

Who bound me by a fatal tie,

My arms, O sire, with thine to try.”

CUCHULLIN.—“ My malediction on her head !

'Tis she who has thy life-blood shed—

She, stung by fury, urged thee on

To glut her jealous rage ;

Against the father armed the son,

This deadly strife to wage ;

Accursed and cruel was the deed,

That causes now our hearts to bleed.”

CONLOCH.—“ Conloch, indeed, thy son am I,

Who by thy hand death-stricken lie ;

Conloch, who ne'er would foeman shun—

Ne'er from the mouth of battle run ;

Nor to a chief beneath the sun,  
 His name declare—but now makes known  
 To thee, illustrious sire, alone.  
 Oh ! hadst thou in this fatal strife,  
 But seen I aimed not at thy life,  
 When, with false aim, my dart I threw—  
 Weak and erring as it flew !”

CUCHULLIN.—“ O my Conloch ! generous, mild,  
 Lost, lamented, gallant child !  
 Dire and ruthless was the blow !  
 Thus to strike thy glories low !  
 Might—Oh ! might’st thou be restored,  
 Once again to grasp the sword ;  
 Girt in all thy martial pride,  
 To combat by thy father’s side ;  
 Erin’s foes from sea to sea,  
 From our wasting arms would flee,—  
 By the lightnings of thy blade  
 Broken, scattered, and dismayed.  
 Now in anguish deep I mourn,  
 Wifeless, childless, sole, forlorn !  
 Slayer of my noble boy,  
 Stranger hence to peace and joy !  
 Never more these hands shall wield  
 Glaive or spear, nor lift a shield—  
 Hands of evil—ever prone

Plagues and sorrows to dispense ;  
 Stand I here a withered bone,\*

Void of foresight, reason, sense.  
 Oh ! had it been thy doom to fall  
 In glory’s field, at glory’s call !  
 But here by him to find a grave,  
 Who now would die thy life to save !  
 This is the keen envenomed dart  
 That rends thy father’s bleeding heart.

Oh, wherefore, with determined will,  
 Flew not thy shaft to wound—to kill ;

\* *Mé an cnaim gan forus*—I am a bone without knowledge.

Well-aimed and barbed with death's decree,  
 To spare not him who spared not thee?  
 Cast upon a raging tide,  
 Mid foam-breakers am I tost;  
 Rocked and whirled from side to side,  
 Sail and mast and rudder lost!  
 Rise ye billows! round me close,  
 Wrap me deep in death's repose!

Now Cuchullin's pride lies low,  
 Sunk in hopeless gulfs of wo.  
 Name and kindred—all are gone!  
 Friend to greet him lives not one!  
 Hoped I once my race to see—  
 Clustering fruits on fruitful tree—  
 Tree now blasted, bud and shoot,  
 By the thunder-flashes cleft,  
 Blasted, withered to the root,  
 I the sole poor berry left  
 On the topmost branch, at last  
 To fall before the feeblest blast.”\*

\* Somewhat similar is the image presented to us in the following lines of Coleridge's *Christabel*:—

“ The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
 That dances as often as dance it can,  
 Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
 On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.”

NOTE.—To enhance the valour and address of Conloch, it is recorded in a legend that Cuchullin would have lost the victory had he not employed a certain short magical dart called *Gae Bulga* (Belly-dart) which, when properly directed, never failed to inflict a mortal wound. Its use and the mode of projecting it, were known only to Cuchullin; and in every desperate conflict it gave him the means of obtaining certain victory. This renowned champion fought with another distinguished warrior named Firdiadh, at Ath (the ford of) Firdiadh, now anglicized Ardee. Cuchullin's servant went a short distance up the stream, and sent the *Gae Bulga* floating down the current towards the combatants. Firdiadh, on seeing it approach, felt alarmed, as it was with the foot it would be used, and if caught by Cuchullin would give him an additional *arm* in the fight. Cuchullin, to throw him off his guard, made a feint with his sword at the head of Firdiadh, who instantly threw up his shield to ward off the stroke, but in the same instant received a mortal stroke of the *Gae Bulga* in the belly; Cuchullin having caught it between his toes, which were as well trained to this use as his fingers to the sword and spear.—For the matter of this note the author is indebted to the kindness of Mr. Eugene Curry.

The *Gae Bulga* may remind the classical reader of the beautiful dart of Cephalus, of which Procris was the unfortunate victim. That dart not only never erred from the mark, but, having executed its purpose, returned

spontaneously, like the celebrated Scandinavian hammer, to the hand from which it was thrown.

— non formosius isto  
 Viderunt oculi telum jaculabile nostri.  
 Consequitur quodcumque petit : Fortunaque missum  
 Non regit ; et revolat, nullo referente, cruentum.

OVID., *Lib. VII.*, *Fab. 26.*

Many are the traditions of the marvellous exploits of Cuchullin, which lay a heavy tax on our credulity. This renowned warrior, who unconsciously slew his own son in a deadly conflict, is said, in O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, to have fallen at the early age of 27, A. M. 3923, in the second year of the Christian era, by the swords of the sons of Calitin, or, as Tigernach writes, was assassinated by Lugad, grandson of Carbry Niafear, king of Leinster.

O'Halloran informs us that Connor, king of Ulster, being apprized of an intended invasion of his kingdom by the king of Connaught, marshalled his forces, and sent orders to Cuchullin to head them, but with strict orders not to meet the enemy till the arrival of Connall Cearnach from a foreign expedition in which he was employed. For six days Cuchullin remained shut up in his camp, but on the seventh rashly engaged and suffered a complete defeat. In this battle, which was fought on the plain of Muir-theimhne, in the county of Louth, war-chariots were used, and numbers of them destroyed in the conflict, which was very bloody. Cuchullin was mortally wounded, but before he expired he directed his charioteer to carry him to a large upright stone, "to place his body standing against it, his sword in his hand, his shield raised up, and his two spears by his left side," as ready, even in death, to hurl defiance at his enemy.—See note, pp. 42, 43.

It was also the fate of Connall Cearnach to fall by the sword. In one of his numerous battles, he slew Olioll, king of Connaught, when he was so fiercely assailed by the Conacians, that his only alternative was victory or death. He animated his soldiers by a short speech, and they fought undauntedly till they were all cut off to a man. So says O'Halloran :—

They fell as Erin's warriors all,  
 In fighting fields rejoyce to fall.



# THE LAY

OF THE

## COMBAT BETWEEN OSGAR AND ILLAN, SON OF THE KING OF SPAIN.

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THE Gaelic original of this Lay, with a translation, may be seen in the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. The Lay of Illan seems to be altogether a fiction, though it may, probably, be based on some traditional story. Certain it is that Ireland, from the earliest records of her history, had intercourse with Spain—political, commercial, matrimonial—not unaccompanied with marvellous adventures.

“Eogan-Mor, *i. e.* Eugenius the Great, was the most strong and powerful in arms in all Ireland in his time. He was commonly called *Mogha Nuag-hatt*, *i. e.* the Strong Labourer. In a great battle fought with Conn of the hundred battles, at *Maigh-leana*, in Connaught, he and his wife’s brother Fraoch, the king of Spain’s son, were slain, with many thousands both Momonians and Spaniards. Beara, the king of Spain’s daughter, was wife to this Eugenius, and mother of Oilíoll Olum, from whom all the nobility of Munster, and many great and noble families in Connacht and Lenster are descended.”—MACCURTIN, p. 102.

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ARGUMENT.—Patrick seeing Ossian in a melancholy mood, reclining on a hill’s green side, inquires the cause of his apparent grief, Ossian replies that the recollection of scenes which he formerly witnessed there, excited mournful reflections. He then proceeds to inform Patrick that once, when the Fenians were assembled there to enjoy their usual pastime, they beheld a female, in splendid dress, and of surpassing beauty, approaching them. She accosted Finn and the chiefs around him, and besought their protection. In answer to Finn’s inquiries, she answered that she was pursued by Illan, son of the king of Spain; that he was a prince of formidable power and valour; and that she dreaded the severe vengeance he might inflict on all who should defend her from his fury. Finn begged her to dismiss her fears, for that no evil should befall her while he and his Fenians could wield a sword. Presently Illan is seen advancing in shining armour, and before they had the least intimation of his ruthless design, he shot an arrow which pierced the heart of the maiden. He was immediately attacked by the Fenians,

but he slew or bound all who opposed him. Osgar, seeing this, sprang forward and challenged the victorious champion to single combat, and, after a severe conflict, slew him. The tomb of Illan and the maiden might be seen on the side of the hill. The Lay concludes by extolling the heroes of old as far superior to those of more recent times.

The main facts of this tale have a striking resemblance to those of Moira Borb.

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I.

PATRICK.—O noble Ossian, valiant chief,  
Why clouded is thy brow with grief,  
As here, upon the hill's green side,  
You view the pleasant prospect wide?

OSSIAN.—Thou lettered sage, in judgment wise,  
Skilled in the counsels of the skies,  
Patrick, in sooth, thou mayst believe  
That no small cause have I to grieve,  
Remembering how for converse sweet,  
In times for aye gone by,  
The Fenians here were wont to meet  
In all their bravery.

II.

As once to spend a festive day,  
Thou sage of honoured name,  
For sportive revelry and play,  
We Fenians hither came;  
A solitary maid we spy,  
With hurried step, advancing nigh.  
A glorious sight I ween.  
O'er all her aspect beauty spread  
In blended hues of white and red,  
And noble was her mien.  
A silver brooch adorned her breast,  
Starred with such clear pellucid gems  
As star great monarch's diadems;  
And o'er her costly broidered vest,

Her neck, like polished marble, shone  
 As radiant as the noon-day sun ;  
 And round it, dazzling to behold,  
 Glanced a rich chain of twisted gold ;  
 With diamonds chased, gold bracelets bound  
 Her arms of softness plump and round.  
 Her satin robe of glistening sheen,  
 Might well adorn a sceptered queen ;  
 And such her dignity and grace,  
 Her matchless charms of form and face,  
 That rapt, entranced, in strange amaze  
 We stood, and on them fixed our gaze,  
 O'ercome by beauty's magic power.

Ne'er had the Fenians till that hour,  
 So felt, warm-thrilling through their frame,  
 Love's potent all-subduing flame.

### III.

Of Finn, the maid of soft white hands,  
 The kind protection first demands ;  
 And of intrepid Gaul, that he  
 Would still her brave defender be ;  
 Of Osgar, son of Ossian, too,  
 And Col, the son of Rugar strong,  
 To grant their friendly aid and true,  
 To shield her from all wrong.

MAIDEN.—“ Ye nobles of the Fenian race,  
 Princes and chiefs, I ask your grace.  
 Your generous sympathy I claim,  
 And trust to you my maiden fame.”

FINN.—“ Who, maid of many a matchless charm,  
 Pursues thee—or would dare to harm ?”

MAID.—Princes, and chiefs, and nobles, know,  
 Illan is my pursuing foe ;  
 A bolder warrior draws not breath,  
 First-born of Spain's great king.

And oh ! I fear what wounds and death  
His rage may on you bring.  
Where'er he moves, to east or west,—  
His power is through the world confest ;  
With sharp-edged sword he cuts his way,  
Insatiate of renown ;  
Compelling all to own his sway,  
And trampling nations down.

FINN.—“ O maiden fair, dismiss your fear ;  
On the soft turf your limbs repose ;  
Be strong—let hope your spirit cheer,  
Though dire the tale your words disclose :  
Though sharp be Illan's conquering blade,  
Thee hence he ne'er shall force.  
Here shall his proud career be stayed,  
Here end his bloody course.”

## IV.

We saw the hero reach the land,  
And draw his galley up the strand.  
With fury darting from his eye  
He viewed us ; and approaching nigh,  
Like to a moving sheet of flame,  
Sparkling and flashing on he came,  
In burnished armour bright ;  
With various plumes his helm was graced ;  
His vizor, o'er his visage braced,  
Was gemmed with studs of light.  
Of richest satin on his breast,  
By silken cords, was laced his vest ;  
And o'er his shoulders broad he rears  
The barbs of two sharp-pointed spears.  
His strong impenetrable shield  
High-bossed and round illumed the field  
With radiant silvery sheen.  
As on he rushed in furious mood,  
To Finn he gave no greeting good ;



But ere we marked his dire intent,  
 Sheer through the maiden's heart he sent  
 A javelin swift and keen.\*

## V.

Then fell beneath his sworded hand  
 A hundred of the Fenian band.  
 Fillan, the son of Finn, he bound;  
 And of his valiant train  
 Thrice nine, that fought their chief around,  
 He girt with fettering chain.†

## VI.

In ponderous mail though strongly dight,  
 Illan was active in the fight,  
 And of resistless force.  
 Osgar, my son, beheld with wrath  
 The carnage scattered in his path,  
 And sprang to stay his course.  
 On the fair champion loud he cried,  
 And sternly to the fight defied.

\* "He rushed on in his fury  
 He neither hailed Fingal nor his people  
*The unerring arrow flew from his hand*  
*And the maiden fell.*  
*The strife of mighty feats*  
*Bore down the king of Sora's son. O tale of woe!*  
 On the green mount was dug his tomb of stone,  
 And over against it is the tomb of the maid."

See the Gaelic of this passage in the Highland Report, p. 230, and Macpherson's version in Fingal, Book III. "The maid stood trembling by my side. He drew the bow. She fell. Unerring is thy hand," I said, "but feeble was the foe!" We fought, nor weak the strife of death! He sunk beneath my sword. We laid them in two tombs of stone; the hapless lovers of youth."

The lines in italics are not in Dr. Young's copy of the poem.

† "Two sons of Priam once Achilles found,  
 And captive led, with *pliant osiers* bound."

In a contest between Cuchullin and Curigh, who carried off the celebrated beauty Blanaid, "Cuchullin was overcome by Curigh, who tied him neck and heels—literally inflicted on him *the five smalls*; this is a Gaelic idiom, signifying that he bound his neck, wrists, and ankles."—KEATING'S *History of Ireland*, pp. 400, 401, note.

## VII.

They met—and furious was the strife  
For fame, for victory, and life.  
As streams that to the valley rush,  
    Swift gathering to a flood;  
So from their wounds, out-bursting, gush  
    Warm cataracts of blood.  
Their clashing swords, in conflict dire,  
Send forth such sparkling streams of fire  
As from the glowing furnace pour,  
When boils and foams the molten ore.  
At length, by one resistless blow,  
Osgar laid white-teethed Illan low,  
And stretched—cut shorter by the head—  
The prince of Spain on his gory bed.

## VIII.

O son of Calphruin, on this heath  
Stands the grey stone he lies beneath;  
    In sooth, the tale is true;  
And, deeply slumbering by his side,  
The maid he sought to be his bride,  
    And in his fury slew.

## IX.

Right-noble were our chiefs of old,  
Dauntless, heroic, generous, bold—  
Still prompt and liberal to reward,  
With precious gifts, the tuneful bard.  
None such, in these degenerate days,  
To win and merit honest praise!  
May all our Fenian chiefs be blest  
    With wide-spread deathless fame!

Still sacred be their place of rest ;  
 And on each honoured name,  
 The sun-bright glories ever shine  
 Of song immortal and divine !\*

\* The veteran Bard, *laudator temporis acti*, rejoices to extol the contemporaries of his youth as far excelling those with whom he was conversant in his old age. Thus Nestor asks—"Who is he ?

"What prince or chief, of the degenerate race  
 Now seen on earth, who might with these compare ?"

Thus Homer says of the "rocky fragment" thrown by Ajax :—

"In modern ages not the strongest swain  
 Could heave th' unwieldy burthen from the plain."

*Iliad*, xii., 455.

And of the "ponderous stone" flung by Hector :—

"Not two strong men th' enormous weight could raise,  
 Such men as live in these degenerate days."

*Id.*, 539.

Had the Bard, who, in the assumed character of Ossian, wrote the lay of Illan, lived in times more like our own, he might be supposed, with a little stretch of imagination, to have concluded in such lines as the following :—

With Finn, my sire, what chief could vie,  
 In mild and gentle courtesy ?  
 With Osgar, rich in manly charms,  
 What warrior match his feats in arms ?  
 Let Erin's sons of song rehearse,  
 And tell to future time,  
 Their great and glorious deeds, in verse  
 Heroic and sublime.  
 That those whom love of glory fires,  
 May learn to emulate their sires ;  
 May bravely, in their country's cause,  
 For human rights, for equal laws,  
 Unite, and with avenging stroke,  
 Asunder rend Oppression's yoke.  
 Yes, let them, boldly-free, demand  
 Their right to live in father-land ;  
 To call their isle their own ;  
 Midst gifts that nature joys to give,  
 To live as freemen ought to live ;  
 To stand before the throne,  
 As freemen ought, erect and strong,  
 To ask redress of every wrong ;

To plead their right to share the soil  
Made fertile by their hands of toil ;  
To plant, to build, all seas explore,  
    To earth's foundations mine ;  
Or high, on tireless pinions soar,  
    In quest of truth divine ;  
Their right through earth and skies to roam,  
    And all the world of Mind ;  
To bring such stores of knowledge home,  
    Such lore and arts refined,  
As virtue, peace, and wisdom prize,  
To make a nation great and wise ;  
And which would render Erin blest,  
O'er all the islands of the west.  
Just theme of many a poet's song,  
As fair the western isles among,  
    And all surpassing far ;  
As midst the radiant orbs of light,  
That stud the wide-spread vault of night,  
    Shines evening's brilliant star.



# THE LAY

OF

## THE CHAMPION OF ITALY.

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THE scene of the following Lay is in a district remarkable for its bold scenery and romantic beauty, in the north-west shores of the county of Donegal. Cintealan (*Cean Teileann*), now Tiellen Head, is one of its magnificent promontories, in the neighbourhood of which lies Gleann Choluim Cille, *i. e.* Columbkille's glen or valley, once a favourite place of resort to the saint, from whom it derives its name. The locality is "described as follows in O'Donnell's Life of St. Columbkille, as translated by Colgan, *Trias Thaum*, p. 391."

"Locus is est Tironallensis patriæ, Occidenti proximus, in Oceanum procul occurrens, in arduos incultosque montes assurgens, in horrida demum promontoria desinens, Columbæ, a cujus asceterio celebris habetur jamdudum sacer."—*Lib. i., c. 15.*—*Annals of the Four Masters*, by John O'Donovan, Esq., M.R.I.A., &c., p. 1890, note.

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ARGUMENT.—The Fenians, fatigued with the chase, had assembled, as usual, on a promontory of the coast, and were enjoying the prospect, when they beheld a distant sail approaching. Presently a fleet came in sight, and, as soon as it reached the strand, a host of armed warriors sprang ashore, led by a chief of formidable appearance, who immediately began to ravage the country. A messenger is in haste despatched to inform the Fenians of the daring threats and cruel proceedings of the invaders. Struck with terror, they suddenly determine that it will be better for them to flee from the country in ships, than remain to be cut down by the enemy. They instantly commence their preparations to flee, when Gaul appears amongst them, flushed with rage and indignation at their cowardice. Finn informs him of what had occurred, and attributes the conduct of the Fenians to the invincible power of the invader. Gaul asks if none of all the chiefs, whom he names, had the courage to meet him; and, after some farther remonstrance, declares that, as for himself, he will never submit to a foreign foe, and that, single-handed, he is ready to risk his life for the honour of the Fenians. Finn encourages him in his heroic daring, and promises liberal rewards, wishing, however, to defer the conflict for two days. But Gaul, anxious to bring the matter to a speedy decision, refuses; and the consequence is an immediate duel with the champion of Italy, who is vanquished and beheaded by the victorious Gaul. The Lay concludes with an expression of pity for the great losses sustained by the enemy.

## I.

Through fair Cintealan's woody glen  
The Fenian chief and his merry men—  
Save Gaul—the chace pursued ;  
Till wearied with the sylvan play,  
Upon the headland height we lay,  
And rolling ocean viewed.  
Soothed by the billows' echoing roar,  
In foam leud-bursting on the shore.

## II.

Far off, a coming sail we view—  
And now a fleet that nearer drew—  
Swift-bounding in the gale they flew  
Strait to our sun-lit strand.  
And now a hundred warriors bold—  
Thrice ten times be that number told,  
With shining glaives and shields of gold,  
Sprang on the yellow sand ;  
Led by a chieftain stern and grim,  
Of daring look and giant limb,  
On lofty daring bent.  
E'en from the margin of the wave,  
With hostile fire and slaughtering glaive,  
He wasted as he went,  
Till all the region, filled with dread,  
Lay quaking to his hostile tread.

## III.

To Almhuin and the Fians Fail,  
Is sped a herald with the tale—  
Charged to declare how, far and near,  
The land was paralyzed by fear :  
That houseless and deserted lay  
The hills and glens, in sad dismay,  
Th' invaders' arms beneath :

And how they swore, with haughty boast,  
 Ne'er to depart from Erin's coast,  
 Till on the tented heath  
 They proved, upon her marshalled hordes,  
 The edge and temper of their swords.

## IV.

Their threats so fierce, and deeds so bold,  
 Turned e'en our ardent warriors cold;  
 And, after counsel sage,  
 They said to Finn "twere better far  
 To yield, than wage a dubious war,  
 And feel such champion's rage—  
 Better to flee across the flood,  
 Than see their children sink in blood."

## V.

Then urged by headlong fear, they seize  
 And launch their gallies on the deep,  
 And hoist their sails to catch the breeze,  
 And fix the oars to sweep.\*

When Gaul, with maddening fury, came  
 To Finn, whose glowing cheek with shame  
 Was deeply crimsoned o'er;  
 And asks—"What frenzy, chieftain brave,  
 Impels our youth to mount the wave,  
 And flee their native shore?"

## VI.

FINN.—"A dauntless champion, sword in hand,  
 Has come from fair Italia's land;"  
 (The Fenian chief replies,)

\*———— With a shout  
 All flew toward the ships; upraised, the dust  
 Stood o'er them; universal was the cry,  
 "Now clear the passages, strike down the props,  
 "Set every vessel free, launch, and away!"  
*Cowper's Iliad, Book II.*

“ He claims our isle by conquest’s right,  
 And dares the boldest to the fight,  
     But none the conflict tries ;  
 With potent hand he makes us flee,  
 And with vain glory mad is he.”

## VII.

GAUL.—“ A wondrous wight ! whate’er his name—  
 Sure from some mighty prince he came,  
 That thus he puts our hosts to shame !”  
     Cried Gaul, with fury stung :  
 “ Against him dared no chief appear ?  
 Dared none exchange one dart or spear,  
 That all, imbued with dastard fear,  
     Thus flee a stripling young ?”

## VIII.

FINN.—“ Most valiant Gaul, by this right hand,  
 Against him dares no warrior stand ;  
     None mates his strength and size ;  
 None such a ponderous blade can wield,  
 None guard his breast with such a shield,  
     No ; none beneath the skies.  
 Lives not a man who dares to try  
 The force with which his weapons fly.”

## IX.

GAUL.—“ What day would Boisgne’s fair-haired son,  
     In homage to a stranger bow ?  
 Would Luaidhe or young Colla, run ;  
     Or Caoilte with the sunny brow ?  
 Or Roina, who the monarch knew  
 To silence—or the nimble Hugh ?  
 What day e’er fled the warlike clan  
     That gives to gems a brighter glow ;\*

\* This is a curious line. If it conveys the true meaning of the original, we may infer from it, that in the days of the bard there was a *jewellers’ corps*



Beneath whose steel the valley ran  
With life-blood from the foe ?  
What day—declare, did the lancers fleet  
Refuse the battle-charge to meet !  
Would Dermot Dunn, the learned, the sage,  
Decline to prove the champion's rage—  
Or Fergus' seven brave sons retire  
In terror from his arm of ire ?  
Of thy own house, O Finn renowned,  
Would Feiné Lochlin quit the ground,  
Before he taught the foe to feel  
The lashes of his sounding steel ?”

## X.

FINN.—“ Now by this claymore sunny bright,  
Though high the house of Finn you praise,  
Against that chief, in single fight,  
It dares no arms to raise.”

GAUL.—“ If then submission be the word,  
While Gaul or Garaidh wears a sword,  
Shall neither from his country go  
A hostage to a foreign foe.”

FINN.—“ If thou art Gaul, the good and brave,  
Who will thy bleeding country save,  
And for the Fenians fight ;  
With thee we'll send a warrior band,  
To Cruachan of the western land,  
To guard thy native right.”

GAUL.—“ Since, in the timid Fenians' cause,  
A trusty claymore no man draws,  
I haste the stranger's arm to try,  
And conquer, for your sake, or die.”

in the armies of Erin, distinguished for their valour not less than for their beautiful workmanship. We are informed that in the palace of Tara, “1,000 guests were entertained daily, besides princes, orators, and men of science, engravers of gold and silver, carvers and modellers.”

Then generous Finn exclaims—" Behold !  
 Great Ollain's weight of purest gold  
 I give, the conflict to delay,  
 Till twice returns the orient day."  
 With cheerful voice and sparkling eyes,  
 Great Gaul, of heart courageous, cries,  
 " Beyond all earthly joys I prize,  
 This moment, to decide the strife,  
 That gives the victor fame and life."

## XI.

Now see, upon the sea-beat strand,  
 The youth and Gaul of brawny hand,  
 The fearful contest wage ;  
 As sword strikes sword, their fire-sparks driven  
 Swift-glancing to the clouds of heaven,  
 Declare their equal rage.  
 Loud rang their arms with clash on clash,  
 And frequent blazed their lightning-flash,  
 Till Gaul, beneath his foeman's shield,  
 Made upward thrust, with cruel harm,  
 And from the socket wrenched the arm : \*  
 With blood grew red the field.

\* These lines may remind the reader of the death-wound of Hector by the spear of Achilles :—

" In his right hand he waves the weapon round,  
 Eyes the whole man and meditates the wound :  
 But the rich mail Patroclus lately wore,  
 Securely cased the warrior's body o'er.  
 One place at length he spies, to let in fate,  
 Where 'twixt the neck and throat the jointed plate  
 Gave entrance : through that penetrable part  
 Furious he drove the well-directed dart."

*Iliad*, Book xxii., 403-410—POPE.

In Dr. John O'Donovan's Translation of the *Annals of Ireland* (pp. 2217-2219), may be seen a singular instance of a British officer receiving his death-wound from the javelin of his Irish antagonist, in the arm pit, the only spot where he was vulnerable, the rest of his body being sheathed in a complete coat of mail.

" There was with Sir Richard Bingham, at this time (1595, when preparing to besiege the castle of Sligo), his own sister's son, a proud and haughty youth, Captain Marten by name, who was the commander of his cavalry. He could not bear to see his enemies near him without attacking them, and proceeded across the bridge of Sligo. When O'Donnell's people perceived them advancing, they returned back as speedily as they were

And still great Gaul more furious grew,  
 Until the warrior bold he slew,  
 And bore in triumph from the strand,  
 The severed visage in his hand.

## XII.

OSSIAN.—“O Patrick! may not pity weep  
 To think how fierce the combat burned;  
 How many warriors crossed the deep,  
 How few to home returned,  
 All doomed to Erin's arms to yield,  
 All left upon the battle-field?”

able, as they were not equal to them in number. The English pursued; but not overtaking them, returned. O'Donnell being informed of this, he determined to lay a snare for the foreigners on the same passage. He selected 100 of the best horsemen of his army, and 300 infantry, with their bows and quivers. He ordered them to lie in ambush within a mile of Sligo, and to send a small squadron of horse to the banks of the river to decoy the English army, and, if pursued, not to wait for an engagement, until they should have come beyond the place where the ambuscade was laid. This was accordingly done. When Captain Marten perceived the small squadron of cavalry on the bank of the river, he advanced directly with a numerous body of cavalry, to wreak his vengeance upon them. The others at first moved slowly and leisurely before them; but these young heroes were soon obliged to incite their horses forward, the English having pursued them with such speed and vehemence. One of them, namely, Felim Reagh Mac Devit,\* was, however, compelled to remain behind, in consequence of the slowness of his horse, and, being unable to accompany his own people, he was obliged to disobey the orders of his lord, that is, to fight the English before he had passed the ambuscade. As he was certain of being immediately slain, he turned his face to the nearest of his pursuers, who was Captain Marten; and as he (Captain Marten) raised his arm to strike his antagonist with his weapon, Felim placed his finger on the string of his javelin, which he had in readiness to discharge, so that he struck Captain Marten directly in the arm pit, and pierced his heart in his breast.† He was covered with mail except in the spot where he was wounded. The English seeing their champion mortally wounded, returned back, carrying him in the agonies of death to the town, where he died that night. O'Donnell was greatly enraged at the failure of his ambuscade, till he heard of the cause, and that the captain died the following day.”

The region around *Cean Teileann*, the scene of the preceding Lay, was also the scene of other events which might claim the notice of the historian as well as of the bard. The following is one which is recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1590:—

“The son of O'Donnell attempted to depose his father, after he had

\* Felim Reagh Mac Devit is still vividly remembered in the traditions of the barony of Inishowen, in the county of Donegal. He was the head of the Mac Devits of Inishowen, who are a branch of the O'Dohertys, and the very man who afterwards burned the town of Derry, from which circumstance the Mac Devits are, even to this day, called ‘Burnderrys’ by their Presbyterian neighbours. They are at present a very numerous sept in the neighbourhood of Londonderry, and throughout the barony of Inishowen.”—Note, p. 1979.

† ——— Partes rimatur apertas  
 Qua vulnus letale ferat.—VIRG., *Æn.* xi, 748.

grown weak and feeble (from age), and after his other son had been imprisoned in Dublin. It was cause of great anguish and sickness of mind to Ineenduv, the daughter of James M'Donnell, that Donnell should make such an attempt, lest he might attain the chieftainship of Tirconnell in preference to her son Hugh Roe, who was confined in Dublin; she therefore assembled all the Kinel Connell who were obedient to her husband, viz., O'Dogherty, Mac Sweeny, and others, with their forces, and a great number of Scots. On receiving intelligence of their muster, he assembled his forces to meet them, at *Doirc-leathan*, the broad derry or oak wood, to the west of Gleann Cholium Cille. The other party did not halt till they came to that place; and a battle ensued between them which was fiercely fought on both sides. The Scots discharged a shower of arrows from their elastic bows, by which they pierced and wounded great numbers, and among them the son of O'Donnell himself, who, being unable to display prowess or defend himself, was slain at Doirc-leathan, on one side of the harbour of Telinn, on the 14th of September, 1590. Around him were slain the three sons of Owen of Mulmurry, with two hundred others."—*Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, p. 1893.



# THE LAY

## OF THE

### DEFENCE OF THE PALACE OF TARA.

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THE Irish original of the following poem, with a literal translation into English, was once kindly lent to the author by James Hardiman, Esq. It was entitled *Laoi an buadais*—Poem of Victory.\* But as that title has no particular correspondence with its subject, he has given it a name expressive of the principal fact which it records; and which is thus noticed in the catalogue of the Irish MSS. in the Royal Irish Academy, vol. ii.:—Finn Mac Cumhail, “in his early youth, went to Tarah, to attend the annual feast given by the monarch, who received the youth with great kindness and distinction. At this time Conn was much annoyed at a circumstance of annual occurrence, the burning of the palace of Tara, by a fairy chief from Sliabh Fuaid, whose custom it was to set all the company at Tara to sleep by the sweetness of his music, and while they were in that condition to burn the palace. On the present occasion Conn arose and said to the assembly, that he who would guard Tara and prevent its being burned that night should get all his inheritance guaranteed to him freely for ever, and if he had been deprived of any part of it before, that it should be restored to him; and to this the monarch bound himself in the usual way. The youthful Finn immediately accepted the conditions, and killed the fairy chief, whose name was Aillen Mac Midhna.”

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ARGUMENT.—Patrick requests Ossian to inform him of the cause of the enmity between the Clanna Boisgne and the Clanna Morni, intimating that the latter were superior in valour to the former. This supposition is felt by Ossian as an indignity; and he proceeds to tell how Cumhall had sent the tribe of Morni into exile, for which injury he was slain by Gaul; but if Nuagadh Neacht, king of Tara, from whom Finn was descended, had been living, he would have gained the victory which Cumhall lost. He then informs Patrick that at the great annual festival of Samhain, the palace of Tara was regularly burned, in defiance of Gaul and all his tribe. To prevent such a catastrophe in future, the monarch Conn despatched a messenger to Finn and the Fenians, requiring their immediate services. On their arrival the monarch asked

\* Macpherson informs us that “it was usual with Fingal, when he returned from his expeditions, to send his bards singing before him. This species of triumph is called by Ossian, the *Song of Victory*.”

who would undertake to defend the palace against the threatened calamity. Finn replied by asking what reward would be given to its defender, and Conn promises the possession of a fortress, a princely estate, and all the titles enjoyed by his father. Finn acknowledges such rewards to be great, and worthy of a monarch to bestow. On his expression of some doubt as to the fulfilment of the promise, Conn solemnly protests that it shall be performed, and if not, his honour would be forfeited with the privilege of ever contending against a foe in arms. Finn then requests, since the task is arduous, that he may have the aid of some brave warrior, and particularly of Gaul. Finn, having received a gracious answer, that he shall have all the aid he asks, desires those under his command to be properly equipped. Gaul promises to pay all arrears of tribute for the Fenians, and Finn goes forth to oppose the besiegers, whose assault he vigorously repels. Next morning he was seen bearing the head of the principal assailant high on the shaft of his spear. Gaul extols the valour of Finn, whom he desires to retain as one of his champions. Finn then informs Gaul that he was the son of Cumhall, who fell before his birth, but that now he is a warrior not unworthy to be associated with the chiefs of Clanna Morni. He then proposes to go with him to Tailtean, where the games were about to be celebrated. The two chiefs become closely united in friendship, and the rewards promised by the monarch are shared between them. The Lay concludes by stating, that though Erin could boast of many gallant warriors, they were unable to defend the palace of Teamor from being burned by Aillen, the son of Midhna, and that Finn was the only one ever found successfully to oppose him.

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I.

O hospitable Ossian tell,  
 What woes the Fenian host befel;  
 And whence the dismal strife arose  
 That made the sons of Boisgne foes  
 To Morni's race; though braver far  
 Than Finn's, in all the deeds of war.

OSSIAN.—Let not thy erring words defame  
 My noble sire's illustrious name.  
 What! must thou yet, O sage, be told  
     How Cumhall into exile sent  
 The tribes of Morni fierce and bold,  
     Their daring to repent?  
 How Gaul to vengeance quickly flew,  
 And Cumhall in his fury slew?

The battle of the hills too well,  
 Alas! can faithful memory tell.  
 And how, on Lena's fatal ground,\*  
 He stood with bloody victory crowned.  
 Had Nuagadh† lived—of men the flower—  
 The day of Foala he had won;  
 His chace and game, with hand of power,  
 Had borne from Morni's shielded son.

\*————— On Lena's fatal ground  
 He stood with bloody victory crowned.

A dispute having arisen between Eugenius, king of Munster, and Conn of the hundred battles, respecting the profits of the ship-duties and fisheries of the bay of Dublin, they determined to decide their controversy by the sword. Accordingly, as O'Flaherty informs us (*Ogygia*, vol. ii., p. 212), their respective armies met (A.D. 192), "in the plain of Moy-Lena in Ferakelly, in the King's county." Conn, being inferior in point of forces, had recourse to stratagem; having attacked the improvident enemy very early in the morning, he obtained a very signal victory. *Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?* Goll, the son of Morna, killed Eugenius, who, not apprehending any attack from the enemy, was asleep."

Were there any truth in this statement, it would be fatal to the honour of Gaul as a brave and chivalrous knight, and in express contradiction to the following record by O'Halloran, vol. i., p. 238:—

"On the day prior to the conflict, it was proposed in a council of war, held by Conn, that on account of the superior numbers of the enemy, they should be attacked by surprise, at night, or before daybreak next morning. To all this the council agreed, except Goll Mac Morni, the monarch's general and chief of the knights of Connaught, who, rising up, said:—'On the day that my first arms were put into my hands, I solemnly vowed never to attack an enemy at night, by surprise, or under any kind of disadvantage; to this day I have religiously adhered to this promise, nor shall I now break it. The attack was, however, agreed on, but Goll declared he would not be in the field before daylight.' The assailants met with a fierce resistance. The armies on both sides fought

With such a brave delight  
 As Erin's warriors ever fight.

"Conn being hard pressed, as the clear day appeared, called on Gaul and his knights to make a charge on the king of Munster, who, being already dangerously wounded, soon fell, and with him, his brother-in-law, the prince of Spain. 'The body of Eogan, pierced by a thousand wounds, was raised up on the shields of the soldiery, and exposed to the view of both armies; which Goll perceiving, cried out—'Lay down the body of the king of Munster, for he died as a hero should die.'"

O'Flaherty says "there are yet to be seen at this place two hills, in one of which we are informed the corpse of Eugenius was interred; and the corpse of Fræch, the Spaniard, who was also slain there, was interred in the other. Conn, after this engagement, being proclaimed monarch of Ireland, reigned twenty years in uninterrupted peace and tranquillity."

† Finn Mac Cumhall was descended from NUAGADH NEACHT, king of Tara.

\* Mac Curtin says in Connaught. See the prefatory note to *Illan*, p. 239.

## II.

Around proud Teamor's palace wall,  
 At Samhuin's lofty festival,  
     Spread war's wide-bickering flame;  
 Nor could the men of Foala brave,  
 With Morni's son, from foemen save  
     The house of royal fame.  
 For Banba's sons, of noble deeds,  
 The monarch Conn a herald speeds.  
 Num'rous as ocean's birds,\* and fleet,  
     The royal mandate they obey;  
 And soon at Teamor's palace meet,  
     In all their proud array.

## III.

"Who," cried the king, "of all your band,  
 For Teamor's walls will boldly stand,  
     With life and limb to guard?"  
 Then dauntless Finn—"O king! declare  
 What honours shall that champion bear—  
     And what his high reward?"

## IV.

Then thus the king—"A fortress high,  
 With fertile lands that round it lie;  
 Loch Awil's court of lordly pride—  
 A city rich—and these beside,  
 The glorious titles that of yore,  
 Your great illustrious father bore."

## V.

FINN.—"By this right hand! a royal meed,  
     And worthy of a monarch's name.  
 But should deceit attend the deed—  
     Oh! 'twere a lasting shame."

\* "Quam multæ glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus  
 Trans pontum fugat, et terris immitit apricis."  
 ÆN. VI., 311.



CONN.—“ I speak the solemn words of truth—  
 Ne’er on my speech, thou white-teethed youth,  
 Did dark deceit attend.  
 For should I break my plighted word,  
 No more I dare, with shield and sword,  
 In feats of arms contend.”

FINN.—“ Then e’er I take the arduous task,  
 Of braver men the aid I ask—  
 Of Gaul renowned in fight.  
 Illustrious chief of the Fenian train,  
 Still foremost on the battle plain,  
 The brightness of all light.”

CONN.—“ Thou shalt have Gaul, and Garraidh too,  
 With Conan, and the daring Hugh,  
 Lough Awil’s pride—with every man  
 That yet remains of Morni’s clan.”

FINN.—“ Then I accept the proffered aid,  
 Though small; let each be well arrayed,  
 And man to man be true.”

## VI.

The blameless Gaul, of generous hand,  
 Then promised for the Fenian band  
 To pay all tribute due;  
 And Finn, of strong resistless blows,  
 From Erin’s king in his might arose;  
 And to defend proud Tara’s towers,  
 Strode forth with all his martial powers.

## VII.

Of Neifen’s son, with age who shook,  
 The old and branded spear he took,\*

\* “ Of all Achilles’ arms his spear alone  
 He took not; that huge beam, of bulk and length  
 Enormous, none Æacides except,  
 In all Achaia’s host had power to wield.  
 It was that Pelian ash which from the top  
 Of Pelion hewn that it might prove the death  
 Of heroes, Chiron had to Peleus given.”  
*Iliad*, xvi., 166—COWPER.

That, since the day of Cumhall's fall,  
Had stood reclined by the ancient wall.  
This spear, in days of yore, renowned,  
And proved in many a fight,  
To guard the palisadoed mound,  
He grasped with fond delight;  
And raised with admiration high  
Its bearded point—and longed to try  
With what a force in battle field  
His arm that matchless spear could wield.

## VIII.

With fire-brands armed, and flushed with rage,  
Exterminating war to wage,  
The Danan foe in shining mail,  
Came on, proud Tara's mounds to scale,  
The royal domes to fire.  
Swift as the rushing wind their course,  
Strong as the thunder's dint their force,  
So terrible their ire!  
In clouds their blazing brands they threw,  
Like meteors bright'ning as they flew;  
And soon had Tara's mansions been  
In black and smouldering ruins seen;  
But dauntless Finn, with lightning speed,  
Still foremost in the hour of need,  
To meet the foes' advance—  
As rapid on the war-cloud came  
With darkening smoke and volleying flame—  
His life-destroying lance,  
Whose thrust no corslet could arrest,  
Plunged deeply in their leader's chest;  
With many a blow and many a thrust  
Repelled the fierce attack,  
The bravest warriors stretched in dust.  
Or drove fear-stricken back,  
While on them the bold Fenians rushed,  
Smote down their broken ranks and crushed;  
Sluiced from their breasts the crimson flood,  
And quenched their burning brands in blood.

## IX.

When Tara's men, with morn, arose  
To see where lay their slaughtered foes;  
Was Finn beheld advancing nigh,  
With trophies of his victory.  
The Danan chieftain's head he bore,  
All ghastly pale, all stained with gore,  
High on his reddened spear.  
The Fenians loud his triumph sung,  
And far and wide the welkin rung,  
With many a joyous cheer.  
But none such thrilling notes could raise  
As generous Gaul to sound his praise.  
On battle field and roaring wave,  
The bravest most extol the brave.

## X.

GAUL.—“Great warrior! by this noble deed,  
Dost thou all Foala's chiefs exceed;  
Henceforth shalt thou with us remain,  
A champion of Mac Morni's train.”

FINN.—Illustrious son of Morni! see  
Great Cumhall's progeny in me.  
Left, when he found an early doom,  
An embryo in my mother's womb;  
But now a warrior strong.  
And not amiss, if right I ween,  
O Morni's son of weapons keen,  
Am I your ranks among.  
To Tailtin's games now let us hie  
With all your clan and victory.”

## XI.

Then close in friendship's bonds allied,  
Finn and Mac Morni's clan divide  
The royal prize—and equal lay  
Fair Foala's lands beneath their sway.

## XII.

Though numerous warriors Erin boasts,  
In flowery vales and fertile coasts,  
As bold, as strong, in battle true,  
As e'er poised lance, or claymore drew ;  
    Yet, maugre all their might,  
Was Tara's palace wrapt in flame,  
When Aillen, the son of Midhna, came,  
    With spear and brand-flame bright.  
Around it the bickering fire to roll  
Was the high delight of the warrior's soul ;  
And none could stay his wild career,  
But Finn alone with his glittering spear.

NOTE.—In consequence of Finn's gallant defence of Tara, he became the commander-in-chief of the Fenians.



## THE LAY

OF

### PATRICK EXHORTING OSSIAN TO ATTEND TO HIS PSALMODY.

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PATRICK.—Up, Ossian! wake! arise!  
And to my psalms give ear;  
Shake slumber from thine eyes—  
The chants' sweet music hear.  
Touched by the hand of age,  
You now are weak and cold,  
You face no more the battle's rage,  
Nor join with warriors bold.

OSSIAN.—Since I no strength nor spirit boast;  
Since Finn no more the Fenian host  
Arrays in martial state;  
Small joy to me your clerics bring;  
I loath to hear them sadly sing—  
Their dismal chant I hate.

PATRICK.—Thou feeble, foolish, grey, old man!  
Since the great world its course began,  
Till now 'twas ne'er thy lot to greet  
Such holy men, such music sweet—  
Such notes from voice or chord.  
But what thy joy in battle fields—  
In trumpet's clang, and crimson shields?  
Though hosts were marshalled on the hill,  
No warrior's post thou e'er canst fill,  
Nor e'en unsheath a sword.

OSSIAN.—Yet could I range the ranks for fight—  
 To lead them my supreme delight !  
 But know, friend Patrick, 'tis a shame,  
 Thus to dispraise my feeble frame ;  
 And he who such reproach can find,  
 Is of a stunted narrow mind.

Though high your boast of music fine,  
 And of your clerics all divine,  
 I hold some music sweeter far ;

The blackbird's song in Letter-vale,  
 The hum of thousands ranked for war,

The thrush's notes of woody 'Sgail :\*  
 The murmur soft, or hollow roar  
 Of waves along the sandy shore.  
 Far more harmonious chimes I hear,  
 When hounds pursue the flying deer,  
 Than all that e'er your clerics sang,  
 With squall, croak, grunt, and nasal twang.

\* "*Crích an Scaíl*, the country of Scaíl, was the ancient name of a territory in Ulster. There is a remarkable valley, anciently called *Gleann an Scaíl*, near Slemmish, in the barony and county of Antrim."—J. O'D.

The preceding Lay may be regarded as a specimen of the disputes which were of frequent occurrence between the native minstrels and the clergy, as to the comparative merits of their different styles of music. See the dialogue between Ossian and Patrick, at the commencement of the Lay of *Slieve Guillin*, in which Ossian laments the melancholy change produced in the state of society since the introduction of the new chants, with the doctrine and practice of fasting, self-denial, and other austerities of monkish rule and discipline. In Ireland, as in Wales, the monks and the bards were determined enemies.


NOTE.—Among the Irish MSS. poems in the library of the Royal Irish Academy is "a poem entitled 'The Dispute about *Tulagh na Feine*, or the Mound of the Fenians.' The original name of Armagh, in which Ossian deeply laments that St. Patrick and his clergy are in possession of it, and declares if his son Osgar and others of the Fenians were then present, they would smash his crozier, bell, and other clerical implements, into *smithreens*, for his impertinence to him."

# MARCH

OF THE

## BANNERED HOST OF CONGAL

TO MEET THE ARMY OF DOMHNALL, MONARCH OF  
IRELAND, IN THE BATTLE FIELD OF MAGH-RATH  
(MOIRA).



DR. JOHN O'DONOVAN, in his introductory remarks to the battle of Magh-Rath, and the historical romance of the Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh, observes that "compositions of this nature were constantly recited by the poets before the Irish kings and chieftains at their public affairs and assemblies, for the purpose of inspiring the people with a thirst for military glory." The fact is distinctly stated in genuine authentic documents that "the four higher orders of the poets, namely, the Ollamh, Anruth, Cli, and Cano, were obliged to have seven times fifty *chief* stories, and twice fifty *sub-stories* to repeat for kings and chieftains. The subjects of the chief stories were demolitions, cattle-spoils, courtships, battles, caves, voyages, tragedies, feasts, sieges, adventures, elopements, and plunders."

"The battle of Magh-Rath was a real historical occurrence and no bardic fiction. It is referred to by Adamnan, the eighth abbot of Iona, who was 13 years old when it was fought. It is also recorded by the very accurate annalist, Tighearnach, under the year 637, in the following words:—A.D. 637. The battle of Magh-Rath *was fought* by Domhnall, son of Aedh, and by the sons of Aedh Slaine (but Domhnall at this time ruled Temoria), in which fell Congal Caech, king of Uladh, and Paelan, with many nobles; and in which fell Suibhne, the son of Colman Cuar."

From a review of the causes and effects of this battle by Charles O'Conor of Belanagare, as quoted by Mr. O'Donovan, we learn that Congal Claon, a prince of the Rudrician race of Uladh, being vanquished and obliged to fly into Britain, remained nine years in exile, but still kept up his party at home, and at last resolved to make a determined effort to return, to drive his great enemy Domhnall from the throne, or perish in the attempt. Being a prince of great address, brave, persevering, plausible, and full of resources, he found means of exciting a warm interest in his behalf among the Saxons, Britons, Picts, and Albanian Scots. They crowded to his standard in such numbers that they soon composed a formidable army. His domestic partizans prepared for his reception, and he landed with safety on the coast of Down.

“Domnall, king of Ireland, was not unprepared. He had wisdom in his councils; and troops, who proved a match for equally gallant troops raised within his kingdom, and for those of the four nations who joined them. He immediately encamped near the enemy at *Moyrath*, and began as bloody a battle as can be found in the records of that age: it continued with various success for six whole days, until victory declared for the nation on the seventh.\* Congal Claon, the soul of the enemies’ army, was defeated and slain at the head of the troops of Ulad. The foreign troops were soon broken with great slaughter; and Domnall Breac, king of the Albanian Scots, hardly escaped to Britain, with the sorry remains of a fine army.”

The tale, or romance, founded on these events, is interspersed with various poetical compositions, according to a practice once prevalent with early Irish and Scandinavian writers. Saxo Grammaticus abounds in them, as do also the Chronicles of the Kings of Norway. In reciting their tales, our bards and senachies, as they grew warm with their subject, would naturally assume a more animated style than that of mere prose, and luxuriate in spirited and florid description.† In the battle of Moyrath, as the ranks were advancing in battle line, King Domhnall inquired of his antiquary, by what standards the different squadrons were distinguished, and received the following answer:—

In strong array, with lance and sword,  
Move Congal’s ranks o’er Ornah’s ford;  
Men of heroic heart and might,  
Who lead the onslaught fierce,  
And who, their courage to excite,  
Ne’er ask the aid of verse,  
Nor dream that words with magic charm,  
Can edge the sword, or nerve the arm.‡

The flag of Macha, warrior bold,  
Of rich and varied satin fold,  
Wide-floating in the wind is spread,  
Conspicuous o’er his royal head.

There Scanlan’s banner waves on high,  
Fair signal oft of victory;

\* “This engagement, so decisive for the nation, in the year 637, rendered *Moyrath* ever since famous in the Irish Annals. It retains the name down to our own time, and was rendered memorable of late, by giving a title to the present learned and worthy possessor Sir John Rawdon, Earl of *Moyra*.”

† “The intermixture of poetry and prose is said to have been first introduced among the Romans by Varro, and followed by Petronius.”

‡ “Compertum ego habeo, milites, verba virtutem non addere; neque ex ignavo strenuum, neque fortem ex timido exercitum, oratione imperatoris fieri.”—*Sallust*.



The ensign too of Fackna Mor,  
Is flaunting Congal's helmet o'er,  
Symbol of great and precious spoil,  
Borne from the foemen's ravaged soil.

Rampant on silk of verdant green,  
A yellow lion's form is seen,  
That royal Connor bore  
Victorious in a hundred fights,  
The banner of the Red-Branch knights,  
Renowned in days of yore.

In front of the embattled line,  
Of Eochay's sons the standards shine.  
High o'er the spears they proudly raise,  
Like streams of fire their pennons blaze.  
There too does Britain's royal knight,  
Great Conan Rod, display  
Broad folds of satin, blue and white,  
Before his armed array.

In stripes of gold and crimson dye,  
Such as adorn the orient sky,  
The banners of the Saxon land,  
A glory round them spread;  
And broad and ample folds expand  
O'er royal Dairbre's head.

A flag of red and sable hue  
Foyle's noble warriors bring;  
To honour's laws still just and true,  
Is their majestic king;  
And ne'er was banner, well I ween,  
Than his, more rich and glorious, seen.

O'er Suidhne, an illustrious name,  
From Dalriada's coast,  
A banner waves like yellow flame,  
In centre of the host

A stripling prince, soft-fingered, mild,  
The shock of arms may turn him wild,  
And whirl him through the ranks of fight,  
A maniac frantic with affright.\*

Feardomhan oft at banquets found,  
And eke of weapons red,  
Of Ulster Ards the chief renowned,  
His troops has hither led.  
And o'er them, in the sunny light,  
Wide-spreading unconfined,  
A satin ensign dazzling white,  
Waves gaily in the wind.

Thus, close arrayed with lance and sword,  
Move Congal's ranks o'er Ornah's ford;  
Men of heroic heart and might,  
Who lead the onslaught fierce;  
And who, their courage to excite,  
Ne'er ask the aid of verse,  
Nor dream that words, with magic charm,  
Can edge the sword or nerve the arm.

\* Of Suibhne the author gives a high-wrought inflated description—how the horrors of the battle affected his brain, rendering him completely frantic, and how he, who had never before been a lunatic or coward, became both, in consequence of having been cursed by St. Ronan, and denounced by the great saints of Erin.

## CUCHULLIN'S CHARIOT.

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“WHETHER the Irish had the use of military chariots, anciently called *Esseda*, after the manner of the old Gauls and Britons, does not appear with any degree of certain'y; but it is probable they had; and I cannot but incline to that opinion, if credit may be given to an ancient anonymous writer of the Life of St. Columb, in which he describes the battle of Cuiledrebne(?) fought in the year 561, in a poetical rather than historical style.”

“They are mentioned in Irish histories a thousand times, and called by the name of *Carbad*, in the same sense as *Carpentum* in Latin. In a book written in Irish, and called *Tain-bo-Cuailgne*, or *the pursuit after the drove of oxen at Cuailgne*, these military chariots, and the manner of the fighting in them, are described much after the way that Cæsar describes the Britons fighting in the same sort of carriage; and the guider of the chariot is there called *Ara*, a page or lacquey, but more properly a conductor, from the obsolete Irish word *Ar*, which signifies to *direct* or *conduct*.”—*Harris's WARE*.

O'Flaherty informs us that Soaltan, the father of Cuchullin and Connal Kearnach, were “the first who managed and broke horses to the saddle—for before that, it was the custom to fight and travel in cars, waggons, or chariots, drawn by two or four horses.”

An ancient poem states that “Finn did not use *horses* for military purposes, until they had taken some in Britain on a certain occasion, and that it was from these British horses the Fenian steeds were all descended.”—*Catalogue of Ir. MSS.*, vol. II., p. 566.

In the Fenian poems there are no equestrian battles, nor manœuvres of cavalry.

For the Irish original, with a literal translation, of the following description of Cuchullin's chariot, the author is indebted to the kindness of Mr. Wright of Clonmel. It is extracted from an Irish romance, entitled *Bristeach mhuighe Muirthemney*, i. e. Breach of the plain of Muirhevney. “The description is given by Luadh, the son of Curighe to the children of Calitan.”

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THE car-light-moving, I behold,  
Adorned with gems and studs of gold;  
Ruled by the hand of skilful guide,  
Swiftly—and swiftly—see it glide!  
Sharp-formed before, through dense array  
Of foes, to cut its onward way;

While o'er its firm-fixed seat behind,  
 Swells the green awning in the wind.  
 It mates in speed the swallow's flight,  
 Or roebuck bounding fleet and light,  
 Or fairy breeze of viewless wing,\*  
 That in the joyous day of spring,  
 Flies o'er the champaign's grassy bed,  
 And up the cairn-crowned mountain's head.

Comes thundering on, unmatched in speed,  
 The gallant grey, high-bounding steed;  
 His four firm hoofs, at every bound,  
 Scarce seem to touch the solid ground;  
 Out-flashing from their flinty frame,  
 Flash upon flash of ruddy flame.

The other steed, of equal pace,  
 Well-shaped to conquer in the race,  
 Of slender limb, firm-knit and strong,  
 His small light head he lifts on high,  
 Impetuous as he scours along,

Red lightning glances from his eye.  
 Flung on his curving neck and chest,  
 Toss his crisped manes like warrior's crest;  
 Of the wild chafer's dark-brown hues,  
 The colour that his flanks imbues.  
 The charioteer, of aspect fair,

In front high-seated rides;  
 He holds the polished reins with care,

And safe and swiftly guides,  
 With pliant will and practised hand,  
 Obedient to his lord's command;  
 That splendid chief, whose visage glows  
 As brilliant as the crimson rose.

Around his brows, in twisted fold,  
 A purple satin band is rolled,  
 All sparkling bright with gems and gold: }

\* The steeds of Achilles speak of themselves thus:—

“ We, Zephyrus himself, though, by report,  
 Swiftest of all the winds of heaven, in speed  
 Could equal.”

*Iliad*, xix., 505—COWPER.



And such his majesty and grace  
As speak him born of royal race ;  
Worthy, by deeds of high renown,  
To win and wear a monarch's crown.

The following is Macpherson's beautiful description of Cuchullin's car :—  
“ The car, the car of war comes on, like the flame of death ! the rapid car  
of Cuthullin, the noble son of Semo ! It bends behind like a wave near a  
rock, like the sun-streaked mist of the heath. Its sides are embossed with  
stones, and sparkle like the sea round the boat of night. Of polished yew  
is its beam ; its seat of the smoothest bone. The sides are replenished with  
spears ; the bottom is the footstool of heroes.”—FINGAL, Book I.

## BAS OISIN.



### THE DEATH, OR, MORE PROPERLY, THE DEATH SONG, OF OSSIAN.

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THE original of the following poem, called BAS OISIN, "representing the manners of Fingal's heroes," may be seen, as extracted from Mr. D. Kennedy's Collection, in the Report of the Highland Society on the poems of Ossian, p. 313.

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As cold descend the chilly dews of night,  
Sad, in the vale of Cona, is my plight.  
No voice of music sweetly charms my ear,  
No sprightly hounds my lonely moments cheer.  
Alas ! too well my wandering thoughts avow  
That I am truly old and feeble now.

Oft as to Cona's vale we loved to stray,  
Gay songs and music sweet beguiled the way.  
There did we greet full many a courteous friend,  
Prone to oblige and fearful to offend.  
When by the pathways to the heights we came,  
They gave us welcome with a loud acclaim ;  
There met the chieftains of the Fenian race,  
In various groups collected for the chase ;  
With rapid steps some loved the steeps to climb,  
E'en to the summit of the cliffs sublime ;  
Some were for carnage of the deer prepared,  
Some armed with shield and spear our chase to guard.

Where my loved Finn had topped the mountain crest,  
Full fifty noble chiefs around him prest,  
And o'er them high, upon its flag-staff raised,  
The sun-burst banner of Galgrena blazed.  
Thence wide dispersed our venturous bands were seen  
In forest-glade or torrent's dark ravine,

Prepared with bended bow and ready aim,  
 To wing their arrows on the flying game.  
 When sprang the startled deer with rapid bounds,  
 We on them slipt a hundred eager hounds,  
 And far as eye its circling glance could throw,  
 Lay many a wounded hart and bleeding roe.

When fell the evening shades, our precious store,  
 Spoils of the chase, to Tara's halls we bore—  
 To Tara, where the voice of music sung,  
 And many a harp and cruit responsive rung,  
 And many a bard, in high heroic verse,  
 The deeds of heroes gloried to rehearse.  
 And many a shell went round, and loud and long  
 Rose the full chorus of the festive song.  
 Ah! who can tell how beautiful were they,  
 The Fenian chiefs, how joyous, young and gay!  
 In games and jocund cheer they spent the night;  
 In wine, in song, in music, their delight.  
 Their pride was, aye, the feeble to defend,  
 To help the stranger, and the wronged befriend.

But when our host was marshalled for the war,  
 Each of our chiefs a hundred foes would dare;  
 Each stood a champion on the battle field,  
 And but with life the victory would yield.

Yet never did we court war's bloody toil,  
 Led by vain glory or the rage of spoil;  
 But to the wronged protection to afford,  
 Or else in self-defence, we drew the sword.

'Twas then in Tara's halls my pride and boast,  
 Of bosom friends to own a numerous host;  
 Though numbering not our king of youthful age,  
 Our wounded warriors, our advisers sage,  
 And maidens fair—But now, I sadly grieve,  
 And sit oppressed with care from morn till eve.

Though I should search the spacious world around,  
 No friend like noble Finn would e'er be found;  
 Lives there not one to boast he so exceeds  
 In heroes' generous thoughts and glorious deeds.

All cold and lifeless in their house of clay,  
 Ne'er more to see the joyous beams of day,

The Fenians heroes lie—and hence my sight  
Is dimmed and clouded by the mists of night,  
And like a wounded bird in forest deep.  
Lonely I languish, and unceasing weep.

Dark all my prospects ! offspring have I none ;  
A blasted tree I stand, whose life is gone ;  
Or, like the nut in withered husk, the last,\*  
Still trembling to its fall at every blast.  
Oh ! it is painful to the bleeding heart  
To find no friend sweet solace to impart ;  
On my choaked voice the night-dews heavy lie,  
And, like the stricken deer, I faint and die.

\* See the conclusion of Conloch, p. 237.

We find the same thought in a Jewish writer, who “thus describes all who were spared of a merciless persecution of the Jews in Mayence.”  
“There were not left of them save two or three berries on the top of the uttermost bough.”



## NOTES.

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NOTE, p. 4.

*"King of your speckled fleet."*

*Breac*, speckled or spotted, an epithet which may have been peculiarly applicable to a fleet of Scandinavian ships, bearing a host of armed warriors—with their snow-white sails—their variously figured prows—their gilded poops—their crimson shields and glittering arms.

Worsaae says that "even before the time when the Danes conquered England, the Northmen had long possessed large and splendid sea-going ships. The Norwegians, in particular, were then constantly making voyages across the Atlantic, to the Shetland Isles, Iceland, and Greenland; nay they undoubtedly reached the continent of America several times; of which Scandinavian and German historical traditions, as well as internal probabilities bear witness."

"Their voyages in the 9th and 10th centuries, are sufficient proofs of the excellence of the Scandinavian ships. It is not, therefore, to be regarded as pure exaggeration if the Sagas use strong expressions in celebrating the war-ships of that time, particularly the galleys, or, as they were called, long ships. These long ships were also called 'Dragons,' because the stems were frequently ornamented with carved, and even gilded images of dragons, vultures, lions, and other animals. They had sometimes crews of several hundred men;—the sails were worked or embroidered with gold, the ropes were of a purple colour, and on the top of the gilded masts sat curiously carved images of birds, which spread out their wings to the breeze."—pp. 109, 110.

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NOTE, p. 9.

*"The royal standard rose to view  
Of Lochlin's glorious king."*

"As Jupiter's eagle had been the war-sign of the Romans, so was Odin's raven the chief mark of the Danes in the heathen ages. An old chronicler (Emma's Encomiast) relates that in the time of peace no image whatever was seen in the flag, or mark, of the Danes; but in time of war there waved a raven in it, from whose

movements the Danes took auguries of victory or defeat. If it fluttered its wings, Odin gave them a sign of conquest ; but if the wings hung slackly down, victory would surely desert them.”—*Worsaae's Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland*, p. 57.

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NOTE, p. 12.

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“ To me  
More sweet to die by warrior's arm  
Than live by grace from thee.”

“ THE successors of the vikings (in England) still preferred to a natural death a glorious one in the field of battle : but Christian tenets no longer permitted them to be marked when on the bed of sickness, with the point of a spear, in order to consecrate themselves to Odin. The mighty Danish jarl Sivard is represented (by Henry of Huntingdon) when on his deathbed as breaking out into sorrowful complaints, and exclaiming, ‘ How shameful it is for me, that I have never been able to meet death in my numerous battles, but have been reserved to die with disgrace like an old cow ! Clothe me at least in my impenetrable armour, gird me with my sword, cover my head with my helmet, place my shield in my left and my gilded axe in my right hand, that I, the bold warrior, may also die like one.’ Attired in full armour he passed gladly to his fathers in the year 1055, and doubtless with the secret hope of enjoying in Valhalla a continuation of that proud martial life for which there would soon have been no longer room either in Northumberland, or in the parent lands of Scandinavia.”—*Worsaae's Account of the Danes and Norwegians*, pp. 36, 37.

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NOTE, p. 35.

“ Where fierce Mac Bovar's cataracts pour  
Down the dark cliffs with deafening roar.”

“ AUTHORS record that a woman might travel Erin alone, without fear of being molested, from the well-known *Osgleann*, in *Umhall*, in the west of the province of Connaught, to the celebrated remarkable rock *Carraig Eoghain*, in the east of Erin, and from the fair surfaced, woody, grass-green island of *Inis Fail*, exactly in the south of *Banba*, of the fair margin to the furious, headlong, foaming, boisterous cascade of *Buadh*, which is the same as the clear-watered, snowy-foamed, ever-roaring, particoloured, bellowing, in-salmon-abounding, beautiful old torrent, whose celebrated, well-known name, is the lofty-great, clear-landed, contentious, precipitate, loud-roaring, headstrong, rapid, salmon-ful, sea-

monster-ful, varying, in-large-fish-abounding, rapid-flooded, furious-streamed, whirling, in-seal-abounding, royal and prosperous cataract of EAS RUaidh and thence northwards by *Teinne Bec an Broghadh*, or by the great plain of *Madh Inninrighe*, to the loud-roaring, water-shooting cliffs of Tory."—*Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh*, p. 105.

Dr. O'Donovan observes that "this wordy description of Eas Ruaidh affords a good example of what was considered the sublime by the writers of Irish romantic tales; the reader may compare it with Virgil's description of Charybdis; and with Macpherson's wild imagery, throughout his poems of Ossian, that he may perceive how the latter, while he adopted the images, chastened the language of the old Gaelic bards. \* \* \* One would be apt to infer, from this exaggerated description, that the waterfall of Eas Ruaidh was as stupendous as the falls of Niagara."—p. 105, note.

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NOTE, p. 40.

*"He challenged of our bravest men  
The bravest, best, two score and ten."*

"WHEN the Chronicles of Ireland make mention of a man able to engage with a hundred, and another to fight with fifty, it is not to be understood as if the first were able to encounter a hundred himself, and conquer them with his own hand, or the other had the courage to engage with fifty, and come off with victory; the meaning is that such an officer had the command of an hundred men, with whom he would fight hand to hand with the same number of enemies; and that an officer, who had fifty under him, would engage with any fifty that opposed him, with their commander at the head of them."—*Keating*.

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NOTE, p. 42.

*"And on each finger placed a ring  
Of gold—by mandate of our king."*

THE following passage, quoted by Ware from Bishop Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia* (1772), may serve to show that the bard does not deal altogether with fiction:—

"Near Ballyshannon were, not many years ago, dug up two pieces of gold discovered by a method very remarkable. The Bishop of Derry happening to be at dinner, there came in an Irish harper, and sung an old song to his harp. His lordship not understanding Irish was at a loss to know the meaning of the song; but upon inquiry, he found the substance of it to be this, that in such a place, naming the very spot, a man of a gigantic

stature lay buried, and that over his breast and back were plates of pure gold, and *on his fingers rings of gold*, so large that an ordinary man might creep through them. The place was so exactly described, that two persons there present were tempted to go in quest of the golden prize, which the harper's song had pointed out to them. After they had dug for some time they found two thin pieces of gold, circular, and more than two inches in diameter.

"This discovery encouraged them the next morning to seek for the remainder; but they could meet with nothing more. The passage is the more remarkable, because it comes pretty near the manner of discovering King Arthur's body by the directions of a British bard (in the reign of King Henry the Second)."

"Nothing," adds Harris, "can call this relation in question, but that the rings mentioned in the song were not found as well as the plates. But that particular, as well as the size of the man, might have been introduced by the bard, as a partial exaggeration, by means of the *Bara* or *Animi impetus* of that sort of people."—*Antiq.*, vol. ii., p. 126.

Notices of a remarkable discovery of silver ornaments at Largo in Fifeshire.—*No. 23 of the Archæological Journal*.

Speaking of the value of popular tradition, the author, Robert Dundas, Esq., of Arniston, after exemplifying the truth of his observation by some facts, and among them that recorded by Bishop Gibson, says, "Another striking circumstance of a similar nature has occurred in more recent times. Some years previous to the golden corslet at Bryn-yr-Ellyllon (the Fairies' or Goblins' Hill) near Mold, in Flintshire, now deposited in the British Museum, an aged woman returning late from Mold, imagined that she had seen a spectre cross her path to the identical mound where the skeleton, encased in gold, was subsequently found; she described the phantom as of gigantic size, and clad in a coat of gold shining like the sun. This she related the next morning to the farmer, whose workmen actually found the corslet in 1833, and there can scarcely be a question that a lingering remembrance of a tradition which she had heard in early years associated with the 'Goblin's Hill,' presented to this woman's imagination such a golden effigy."

"A corslet of gold, sold for £600 to a goldsmith at Cork, was found near Lismore."—*Walker's Dress of the Irish*, p. 177.

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NOTE, p. 47.

"No chief like Finn, the world around,  
Was e'er to bards so generous found,  
With gifts of ruddy gold."

THE bard seldom loses an opportunity of extolling the generosity of the Fenian chiefs, intending his praises as a modest hint to his



patron or entertainer to follow so laudable an example. O'Donovan informs us that "a king always considered it his duty to give presents to poets at public banquets and assemblies." "When the poets, at the desire of Domhnal, went after Congal to persuade him to stop; Congal, perceiving them approaching, exclaimed, 'the munificent character of Ulster is tarnished for ever, for we gave the poets no presents at the banqueting house, and they are following us to upbraid us.' The poets came to Congal—he bade them welcome, and gave them great presents, and they told him their embassy."—*Dun-na-n-Gedh*.

A poet, speaking of his prince, Brian O'Neill, in a poem, says,

"He gave twenty horned cows  
For my poem; it was a goodly purchase;  
Were they twenty cows with golden horns,  
My honour was greater and better."

The Welsh bards "frequently addressed poems to their princes and lords, in which they solicited presents, such as a horse, a bull, a sword, or a garment; and they were seldom, if ever, refused."—*Warrington's Wales*, p. 269.

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NOTE, p. 50.

"Nor thy crozier here, nor white book remain,  
Nor thy bells be heard for ever."

THE bards had no respect for the croziers and bells of the priests, nor indeed had they any reason to respect them; for, as we are told in a note to "The Banquet of Dun na-n-Gedh" (p. 38), "The ancient Irish saints were accustomed to *curse* the offending chieftains while sounding their bells with the tops of their croziers."

In Wales the monks and the bards were bitter enemies. "Indeed the bard was generally a heretic, and much given to look through the deeds of the clergy. As monks and bards increased in number, they became more and more enraged against each other; they were rival beggars, and therefore in each other's way. In these encounters (begging) the monks were overmatched, for the wit of the bards was aided by the popular contempt into which the mendicant friars had fallen. The reader of Chaucer will perceive that the same sentiments prevailed on the other side of the Severn."—pp. 110, 111.

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NOTE, p. 50.

"With chessmen played."

In the introduction to *Leabhar na-g-Ceart*, the Book of Rights, p. lxi., may be seen the following description of an Irish chess-board, quoted from *Leabhar na-h-Uidhri*, a MS. of the twelfth century:—

"It was a board of silver and pure gold, and every angle was illuminated with precious stones, and a man-bag of woven brass wire."

"The chessman is frequently referred to in old tales, as in the very ancient one called *Tain bo Cuailgne*, in which the champion Cuchullain is represented as killing a messenger, who had told him a lie, with a *fear fiteille*," i. e. a chessman.

"Cuchullain and his own charioteer, Leogh, son of Rianganbhra, were then playing chess. 'It was to mock me,' said he, 'thou hast told a lie about what thou mistakest not.' With that he cast one of his chessmen at the messenger, so that it pierced to the centre of his brain."

"O'Neill's bard boasts of the victories which Brian O'Neill and his ancestors had gained in their own province over their immediate neighbours in Eastern Ulster, and over the kindred race of Tir-Conaill. He next speaks of the *proud* circumstance that Brian's ancestors had in their hall a chess-board formed of the bones of their hereditary enemies, the Leinster men, which is rather a barbaric boast in 1260."—*Miscellany*, 182, 183.

The bard sings :—

"Chess of the shin-bones of Leinster men,  
In our workshop was constructed;  
Smooth chessmen were on the tables of our ancestors,  
Of the bare bones of Leinster man."

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NOTE, p. 51.

"*The son of Luno's skill.*"

THIS Luno, the celebrated Ossianic fabricator of swords, was not unknown in the Highlands of Scotland. Donald Macqueen, minister of Kilmuir, in the Isle of Skye, says, in a letter to Dr. Blair, "I have just now before me a poetical relation by Ossian, of the interview betwixt Fingal and his friends, and Luno, the son of Leven, who made the swords of which I sent you a description—in which Luno is pointed out as a very wild savage, going upon one leg (*lame like his great grandfather Vulcan*), with a staff in his hand, clad in a mantle of black hide, with an apron of the same stuff before, and his complexion much of the colour of his garb, skipping off to his smiddy with the fleetness of a March wind, and the bobbing of the hard untanned skin behind him, was the principal point of view as he flew over every rising ground before them."—*App. Highland Society*, p. 33.

Why should Luno be called "a wild savage" for appearing in his proper costume, and not as a man above his trade? The writer here quoted says he has just esteem for Macpherson's genius, that he believes there is "a foundation in the ancient songs for every part of his work," but that he "hath tacked together into the poem, descriptions, similes, names, &c., from several detached pieces."

NOTE, p. 68.

“*And many a spit with haunch of deer.*”

THE mention of *spits* may suggest to the reader that the art of cookery had been well understood and practised in Ireland at this period. Some have alleged that the most characteristic definition of man is, that he is a cooking animal, and that superiority in the art of cookery is demonstrative proof of elegance and refinement. The curious reader may see in Dr. Petrie's Essay on Tara, in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, an amusing account of the “arrangements of the dining-hall at Tara, the customs of which were preserved, though on a limited scale, in the household of every chief, not only in Ireland, but also in the Highlands of Scotland, as late even as the 16th century.”

Martin, in his description of the Western Isles of Scotland, says, “Before money became current, the chieftains of the Isles bestowed the cow's head, feet, and all the entrails upon their dependents; such as the physician, orator, poet, bard, musician.”

\* \* The smith had the head—and “this ancient custom is preserved in many parts of Ireland to this day, viz., that when a farmer kills a beef or pig, it is customary to send the head to the smith, whose kitchen often presents the spectacle of 50 to 100 heads obtained in this manner.”—p. 212.

A most laudable custom, and by none of the smiths disapproved.

Our learned and venerable friend the author of the Essay on Tara, informs us, on the authority of ancient MSS., that “the spits used in the *Teach Míodhchuarta* at Tara have been deemed worthy of a particular description, and even the names of their supposed fabricators, perhaps inventors, have been preserved by the bards.”

In the book of Glendaloch is depicted the *Bir bruinneas*, a particular kind of spit, “on which the *dawl* or waiter, is roasting a *les*, or round of beef.”

*Bir Nechin*, or *Dechin*, is the spit of *Dechin* the chief smith of Tara in the time of the Tuatha-De-Danans. A spit, of curious construction, called the *Inneoin* of the *Daghdha*, made by Drinne, the son of Luchair, is thus described:—“It was thus: a stick at each end of it, and its axle was wood, and its wheel was wood, and its body was iron; and there were twice nine wheels on its axle that it might turn faster, and there were thirty spits out of it, and thirty hooks and thirty spindles, and it was rapid as the rapidity of a stream in turning; and thrice nine spits, and thrice nine cavities (or pots), and one spit for roasting, and one wing used to set it in motion.”

NOTE, p. 75.

“*Blind Gaul renowned in fight.*”

GAUL, like Hannibal, was blind of an eye. An Irish bard might have exclaimed with the Roman satirist,

O qualis facies et quali digna tabella !

## NOTE, p. 77.

*"And with his keen remorseless blade  
Smote off her lovely head."*

ATROCIOUS as was the deed of Conan in cutting off the head of the Grecian maiden, it was not more so than that of Macpherson's *Starno*, who came with a false story to Corman-trunar and his daughter, by whom he had been hospitably received, but in the dead of night, when sleep descended on them—"I rose," says Starno, who tells his own story, "I rose like a stalking ghost. I pierced the side of Corman-trunar. Nor did Fiona Bragal escape. She rolled her white bosom in blood."—*Cathloda*.

In the Welsh Ode on the Death of Hoel, mention is made of another Conan,\* of a very different description, thus versified in Mason's notes :—

"Conan's name, my lay, rehearse,  
Build to him the lofty verse,  
Sacred tribute of the bard,  
Verse, the Hero's sole reward.  
As the flame's devouring force ;  
As the whirlwind in its course ;  
As the thunder's fiery stroke,  
Glancing on the silvered oak ;  
Did the sword of Conan mow  
The crimson harvest of the foe."

In a paper by the Rev. William Hamilton, in the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, 1787, he informs us that in a legend in verse, ascribed to Ossian, he met the following passage :—

"The fierce and mighty Conan was not in the desperate battle of Gabhra ; for in May the preceding year (*Am Bealtaine an Bliadhain roimhe*) the dauntless hero was treacherously slain by the Fenii of Fin, at an assembly met to worship the sun :—His sepulchral monument was raised on the north-west ! His wailing dirge was sung ! And his name is inscribed in Ogham characters on a flat stone on the very black mountain of Callan !"

## NOTE, p. 79.

*"A deed that gave to Oscar's name  
A glorious and immortal fame."*

THESE lines seem to form a proper conclusion to the Lay of Glennasmol. But in the literal translation by Mr. Eugene Curry, there are four additional stanzas, in which the Grecian princess, as she lies on the ground, mortally wounded, laments her fate, and utters grievous maledictions on her father, who, by his magical arts, had transformed, and then banished her from his

\* This hero's name, however, is otherwise spelled *Kynon*, *Chynon*. "He is frequently mentioned by the bards of the middle ages, and celebrated both for his bravery and for his devotion as a lover."—*Mabinogion*,—note, p. 66.



court, to avert a prophecy of the Druids that she should have a son that would destroy Greece. But had any man consented to be her husband when in her forlorn condition, the beauty of which she had been robbed by enchantment, would be restored, and the son she was to bear, would conquer the world.

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NOTE, p. 100.

*"Torques, brooches, rings, and diadems."*

AMONG the precious reliques of antiquity which have been found in various districts of Ireland, are golden torques, (*Ir. torc*), of which several beautiful specimens may be seen in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Their intrinsic value shows that they were worn only by men of high rank and distinction.

Two beautiful torques found about the year 1810, at Tara, are now in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. The one is 5 feet 7 inches, from one extremity to the other, and weighs 27 oz. 9 dwts. The second weighs 12 oz. 6 dwts. "They are of a spiral or screw pattern—formed of four equidistant radiations from a common centre, subsequently twisted into a spiral form." Two others of a different form were found a few years ago in the county of Wexford, the one flat, quadrilateral, not twisted; the smaller plain; both of the purest gold: the one more than 27 inches in length, and 9 oz. in weight—the other in length 16 inches, and in weight 5 oz. Their intrinsic value £56 15s.

We are told by Sharon Turner that golden torques formed part of the ancient British costume. Llywarch mentions it, p. 135:—

*Four and twenty sons I have had  
Wearing the golden wreath, leaders of armies.*

Aneurin states, that in the battle of Catteraeth there were

*Three hundred and sixty-three who had the golden torques.*

"In 1692, an ancient golden torque was dug up near the castle of Harlech, in Merionethshire. It is a wreathed bar, or three or four twisted rods of gold, about four feet long, flexible and hooked at both ends, about an inch in circumference, and weighs eight ounces."

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NOTE, p. 111.

*"The poisoned spear in his hand he shook."*

MENTION of poisoned weapons occurs frequently in ancient Irish compositions; and it is presumed they were deemed peculiarly valuable, as armed with double power to kill. In the Book of

Rights (*Leabhar na g-Ceart*) it is stated that among the presents to be sent, for the sons of the chieftains, are

" Twelve lances on which there is poison;  
Twelve swords with razor edges;  
Twelve suits of clothes of every colour;  
For the use of the sons of the great chieftain."

p. 243.

And in the miscellaneous volume of the Celtic Society (p. 152), are found the following lines:—

" Of what avail is valor or many spears?  
By poison a fierce battle is gained,  
Until O'Neill was disabled by poison,  
The prowess of the hero was terrible."—155.

Poisoned weapons were used by the Anglo-Saxons.

"When an attempt was made to assassinate the king, by an emissary of Cwichelm, king of Wessex, Edwin was saved from certain death by the fidelity of one of his Thanes, Lilla by name, who, throwing himself between his royal master and the murderer, received the poisoned short sword in his own body."—*Southey's Book of the Church*, i., p. 41.

Those famous archers, the Parthians and Cretans, used poisoned arrows, as we learn from Virgil, *Æn.* xii., 855.

—————" Illa volat  
Non secus, ac nervo per nubem impulsa sagitta;  
Armata sævi Parthus quam felle veneni,  
Parthus, sive Cydon, telum immedicabile torait."

NOTE, p. 129.

" *The wild boar's savage race.*"

WE learn from the following anecdote that the wild boar was a formidable animal in Ireland, so lately as the reign of Henry the Second:—

"One of the Furlonges of Furlonge, of Devonshire, was in the train of Henry the Second during his visit to Ireland. When that monarch was passing a few days at Wexford, previous to his departure for England, he one day rode with some followers to chase the deer in the then great oak-forest of the Glynn; Furlonge was of the party, and so fortunate as to kill an immense wild boar which had attacked the king, and succeeded in dismounting him, ripping up his horse; the sovereign knighted his preserver, and bestowed on him a large tract in that neighbourhood. The Irish branch of the family assumed for their arms, in memory of this, the bearing of a boar issuant from an oak wood."—*Mr. and Mrs. Hall's Ireland*, ii., p. 176, note.

NOTE, p. 178.

*“ With rich armorial signs emblazed,  
Of many a various dye.”*

THE origin of the use of banners and coats of arms among the Irish is thus recorded by Mac Curtin :—

“ The Israelites, when under great slavery and persecution in Egypt, gathering together the twelve tribes under the conduct of Moses, to eschew the tyranny of Pharaoh, each tribe had a certain banner with a certain coat of arms blazoned thereon, came to Capacyront, where Niul, the father of Gaodheal, or Gadelus, then resided, near the borders of the Red-Sea, and afterwards passed through the same. The great grandson of Niul, by name Sruth, being likewise banished out of Egypt, with all his family and friends, in imitation of the Israelites, had a banner with a dead serpent, and the rod of Moses painted thereon for his coat of arms ; and this particularly, because Gadelus, his grandfather, when wounded by the serpent, was cured by the wonder-working rod of Moses. And Sruth’s posterity ever after used banners and coats of arms after him. The book called *Leabhar leathcain* gives the same account, and sheweth in a smooth, strict, and learned Irish poem or verse, the banners and coats of arms of the twelve tribes of Israel.”

“ The dead serpent with the rod of Moses, was the only device on the banners of the Milesians, till the reign of Ollam Fodhla, when it was enacted “ that every great lord or chief commander should have a particular coat of arms assigned them according to their several deserts, whereby they might be known to their *Antiquaries*, and other men of knowledge, either by sea or land, when they appeared in arms or otherwise.”

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NOTE, p. 181.

*“ To Cormac gave a stern command,  
The cauldron of the Fenian band  
Upon his neck to bear.”*

THE cauldron was a very important article of camp equipage. To the shoulders of the monarch it was probably an oppressive burden, independently of the ignominy. But the act gives Finn a fine opportunity of showing the generosity of his character by voluntarily relieving the king, and submitting to the same task.

Many superstitions were connected with certain Irish cauldrons. Among the curiosities brought to Ireland by the Tuatha De Danans, was a cauldron called Coirean Daghdha, used, as Vallancey informs us, in the sacrifices to Daghdha ; and which, like the witches’ cauldron in Macbeth, may have been used in preparing “ hell-broth ” for magical rites.

In the banquet of *Dun-na-n-Gedh* (p. 51), is an account of a cauldron named *Caire Ainsicen*, "which was used to return his own proper share to each, and no party ever went away from it unsatisfied ; for whatever quantity was put into it, there was never boiled of it but what was sufficient for the company according to their grade and rank."

Sharon Turner says "the cauldron was a part of the bardic mythology, which is not much understood ; Taliesin twice alludes to the pair *Ceridwen*. Thus,

*I received my genius  
From the cauldron of Ceridwen,*

*Is not my chair protected by the cauldron of Ceridwen,  
Therefore let my tongue be free.*

The second of the *Mabinogion*, or *Welsh Tales*, mentions a magic cauldron which had the power of giving life. Bran, king of Britain, gave *Matholwc*, the sovereign of Ireland, a magic cauldron which had this virtue, that if a person slain was thrown into it, he recovered his life and vigour, but lost his utterance. *Matholwc* married Bran's daughter, but, ill-using her, Bran invaded Ireland. In the battle, as fast as the Irish fell, they were brought to life by being thrown into the cauldron, till *Evynsion*, or the evil-minded one, being thrown in, he stretched himself and broke it to pieces. The idea of this magic cauldron may have been borrowed from the mythology of the cauldron of *Ceridwen*."—*Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems*, pp. 282, 283.

"After this Arthur sent an embassy to *Odgar*, the son of *Aedd*, king of Ireland, to ask for the cauldron of *Diwrnach Wyddel*, his purveyor. And *Odgar* commanded him to give it. But *Diwrnach* said, 'Heaven is my witness, if it would avail him any thing even to look at it, he should not do so.' And the embassy of Arthur returned from Ireland with this denial. And Arthur set forward with a small retinue, and entered into *Pryden*, his ship, and went over to Ireland. And they proceeded into the house of *Diwrnach Wyddell*. And the hosts of *Odgar* saw their strength. When they had eaten and drank as much as they desired, Arthur demanded to have the cauldron. And he answered, 'If I would have given it to any one, I would have given it at the word of *Odgar*, king of Ireland.'

"When he had given them this denial, *Bedwyr* arose and seized hold of the cauldron, and placed it upon the back of *Hygwyd*, Arthur's servant, who was brother, by the mother's side, to Arthur's servant *Cachamwri*. His office was always to carry Arthur's cauldron and to place fire under it. And *Llenlleawg Wyddell* seized *Caledvwlch*, and brandished it. And they slew *Diwrnach Wyddell* and his company. Then came the Irish and fought with them. And when he had put them to flight, Arthur with his men went forward to the ship, carrying away the cauldron full of Irish money.



"After this expedition Arthur returned with a chosen host of horse and foot. On his landing he was met by the saints of Ireland beseeching his protection. This he granted, and they brought him provisions. And Arthur went as far as Eisgeir Oervel in Ireland to the place where the Boar Trwyth was with his seven young pigs. That boar, as Arthur informed his people, 'was once a king, and that God had transformed him into a swine for his sins.'"—*Kilwhick and Olwen*, 307—309.

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NOTE, p. 184.

"When, sudden, Tara's Druid rose,  
Prophetic of impending woes."

"DRAOI (rendered Druid) signifies a wise man, a conjuror, a necromancer, but has nothing to say to the Gaelic and Celtic Druid. The Draoi were never in holy orders in Ireland. 'In the days of Herod the king there came (Draioith) wise men from the east to Jerusalem.'—*Matt. ii., 1, Ir. Test.* These were not priests, they were shepherds and astronomers. Bishop Bedel in his preface to the New Testament in Irish, tells us, that he had caused the same to be translated in the true *Ogham* or mysterious meaning of each word. So far was Mr. Pinkerton right in asserting that there never was a Druid in Ireland."—*Vallancey's Prospectus of an Irish Dictionary*.

*Druid.*—"In the times of Paganism in Ireland, every poet was supposed to possess the gift of prophecy, or rather to possess a spirit capable of being rendered prophetic by a certain process." An account of the "process" may be seen in connexion with this statement in a note, p. 46, to the Banquet of *Dun-na-n-Gedh*, by Dr. John O'Donovan, who adds, on the authority of Cormac's Glossary, that it was a "humbug not unlike the magnetic sleep of modern dreamers."

A belief in omens and prognostics was once very prevalent in Ireland, as indeed in all other countries, nor is it yet extinct. Superstitious fears and imaginations, still continue to exercise their dominion, particularly in regions to which the light of moral and scientific truth has not yet penetrated:—

Hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necesse est  
Non radii solis, neque lucida tela Diei  
Discutiant, sed Naturæ species, ratioque.

*Lucretius, i.*

For those dark terrors that the mind enshroud,  
That moral gloom, that intellectual cloud,  
Yields to no beam or lucid shaft of day,  
But flies dispersed by Reason's brighter ray.

Our friend Conan, though not remarkable for prudence or discretion, had sense enough to place but little faith in atmospheric prognostics. He is represented, in some succeeding lines, as

treating the fears of the Druid and the Fenians with ridicule: and, though he was no Hector, he might appreciate the patriotic sentiment of the Trojan hero, and address the clouds as Hector the eagles, when Polydamas spoke of the "sinister flight" of one of those birds:—

"Ye vagrants of the sky! your wings extend,  
Or where the suns arise or where descend;  
To right, to left, unheeded take your way,  
While I the dictates of high heaven obey.  
Without a sign his sword the brave man draws,  
And asks no omen but his country's cause."

Il, xii.

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NOTE, p. 202.

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"You hazard more  
From foe behind than foe before."

THE story here recorded of Conan has its parallel in the following fragment of oriental history:—

"During a holy war which was carried on in the happy time of the Apostle of God, (on whom be peace,) a certain valiant champion of the enemy's army came out to offer single combat, and demanded that the glorious Alli should be opposed to him. Alli, well-pleasing to God, having received the command of the Apostle, girded on his sword only, and immediately went forth to the place appointed for the combat. When this friend of the Most High met that infidel, he thus addressed him, 'I come on foot, having one sword; why come you on horseback having two swords and two bows?' The great Alli spoke to him again, saying, 'Let these things be so;—but I come out alone to give battle on our side, why do you bring another man, and come both together?' The infidel at this question looked about him, believing that another man had followed him, when, at the same moment, the great Alli, in the twinkling of an eye, made the vile head of the reprobate fly off."

"This is quoted by the soldiers of Islam to justify all kinds of stratagems."—*Wilkison's Account of Wallachia and Moldavia.*

In Huc's travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China, there is an amusing account of a victory in wrestling, which a puny wight obtained over a powerful antagonist, by a stratagem worthy of the redoubtable Conan:—

"In the great wrestling match of 1843, a wrestler of the kingdom of Efe had overthrown all competitors, Tartars and Chinese. His body of gigantic proportions, was fixed upon legs which seemed immovable columns; his hands, like great grappling irons, seized his antagonists, raised them, and then hurled them to the ground, almost without effort. No person had been at all able to stand before his prodigious strength, and they were about to assign him the prize, when a Chinese stepped into the ring. He was short, small, meagre, and appeared calculated for no other purpose than to augment the number of the Efeian's vic-

tims. He advanced, however, with an air of firm confidence; the Goliath of Efe stretched out his brawny arms to grasp him, when the Chinese, who had his mouth full of water, suddenly discharged it in the giant's face. The Tartar mechanically raised his hands to wipe his eyes, and at the instant, the cunning Chinese rushed in, caught him round the waist, threw him off his balance, and down he went, amid the convulsive laughter of the spectators."—pp. 81, 82.

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NOTE, p. 203.

*"She courteously asks Aile if she would wish to see a single combat."*

Few spectacles, if any, are so exciting as a battle, and hence the Romans delighted so much in gladiatorial sports, and in sham fights, both on land and water, when they could not have the reality. Lucretius, to enhance our estimate of the pleasures of moral science, says that they surpass even the delight of beholding the battle-strife of armies :—

Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli,  
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri:  
Sed nihil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere,  
Edita doctrina sapientum, templa serena.

*Lib. ii., 5.*

Sweet is the joy to view secure, from far,  
Armed legions rushing to the shock of war;  
But sweeter nought than up the mount to climb,  
On whose fair summit science dwells sublime,  
In light serene—and in the temple bide  
That wisdom's skill has built and fortified.  
And thence survey the vain pursuits of life, &c.

The wife of Finn asking Aile if she would wish to see a single combat, may remind the reader of one of the amusements provided for Queen Elizabeth by Sir Christopher Hatton, of whom we are informed that in 1576 she dined with that celebrated Lord Chancellor of England, at Eltham, "and he provided hunting, music, and a *passage at arms*, for her amusement."—*Lord Campbell's Lives of the Chancellors.*

Even modern royalty can be honoured and gratified by seeing the image, if not the reality, of a battle.

At the Braemar Gathering in the Scotch Highlands, September, 1851, at our illustrious Queen's visit to that locality, "there was a celebration of the national games and sports, for the gratification of her Majesty. The fully armed men of the different clans went through their military evolutions. The games were the putting of the stone 28 lbs., throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, and rewards for length of service, for the two best readers of Gaelic, and the best *sword dancers*."

NOTE, p. 204.

*"The Lamentation of Aile."*

THIS lamentation, in the original Irish, is regarded, by those who can read and understand it, as a fine specimen of their ancient elegiac poetry; the pathos and beauty of which cannot easily be preserved in a translation. Each line, in many of the stanzas, commences with the pathetic exclamation *Mo-Cuma! my wo! my affliction!* or *alas!* The frequent repetition of the same expression of grief seems to have been accounted a beauty in the compositions of the Irish minstrels—but it becomes tedious and loses its effect. The *keen*, or funeral dirge, is still sung in many places of Ireland, and while the mourners are bearing the remains of their departed friend to the grave, their sad and mournful chant, as the sound rises and falls on the passing breeze, and is echoed by the neighbouring hills, is the most wild and melancholy that can be imagined. Nothing, perhaps, can convey to one who has never heard it, a more adequate idea, than the sounds of an Æolian harp.

The poem is valuable chiefly for the description of the omens, which we may conclude were deemed the most important in the age when it was composed.

In the Life of John Elliot, the celebrated missionary to the North American Indians, it is stated that when the Indian chief Philip "began to gather his warriors around his dwelling-place—strange sights and sounds foreboded, in many parts of the colonies the woes that were near; the singing of bullets, and the awful passing away of drums in the air; invisible troops of horses were heard riding to and fro; and in a clear, still, sun-shiny morning, the phantoms of men fearfully flitting by!"—*Carne's Lives of Eminent Missionaries*, i., p. 66.

"Among the ancient Britons, a meteor was supposed to be a vehicle for carrying to paradise the soul of some departed Druid. This superstition, like many others, had its origin in Druidical artifice. The priests of that order, to strengthen their influence, took occasion, from every ærial phenomenon, to blind and overawe the ignorant; and as they laid claim to extraordinary sanctity, they went naturally to the broad fields of the sky for strengtheners to their illusions. So well did they engraft their absurd opinions, that even at this distant day, the appearance of a ball of fire creates, among the more ignorant Gael, a belief that some illustrious spirit has taken its flight to eternity. That ingenious antiquarian, Dr. Smith, thinks that the Druidical fantasy just mentioned, must have had its origin in a tradition of Enoch's (Elijah's) fiery chariot."—*Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary*.



## NOTE, p. 231.

"Tribute just that all must pay,  
O'er this bridge to smooth their way."

IN "*The Fairy Queen*," and in "*Orlando Furioso*," we read of a similar practice:—

—————"Here beyond,  
A cursed cruel Sarazin doth wonne,  
That keeps a bridge's passage by strong hand;  
And many errant knights hath there forodonne."

"Thus the Pagan in *Ariosto* keeps a bridge which no man can pass over unless he fights with him." "In *Morte Arthur* we find an account of a knight who kept a bridge, which Spenser seems to have copied:—"On the third day he rode over a long bridge; and there start upon him sodainely a passing fowle chorle, and he smote his horse, and asked him why he rode over that bridge without his licence?"

So Spenser—

"Who as they to the passage 'gan to draw,  
A villaine came to them with scull all raw,  
That passage money did of them require."

Warton's *Observations on the Fairy Queen*.

## NOTE, p. 251.

"While Gaul or Garaidh wears a sword."

GARAIÐH MAC MORNÍ was the brother of Gaul. Being unfairly slain by Mac Smaile, son of Dubh Dithre, one of Finn's men, Garaidh's son Aodh (Hugh) insisted on being paid the *eric* of his life, to which Finn agreed, and Caoilte was sent to Aodh with the *eric*, consisting of a necklace, sword," &c.—*Catalogue of Irish MSS., Royal Irish Academy*, vol. ii., p. 573.

Caoilte was a poet as well as a distinguished warrior. There is extant a poem of his "describing Cnu Deróil, a dwarfish harper that Finn found on the side of Sid-Ban-Finn, now Sliabh-na-mban, in Tipperary. The name of this famous harper occurs in many of the old Fenian poems."—*Id.*

NOTE, p. 18.—The following notice of "The Grave of Magnus the Dane," appeared in the *Downpatrick Recorder*, July, 1852:—"A correspondent wishes to be informed of the exact spot where the Scandinavian hero, Magnus, was interred ('near the Cathedral.') In reply, we have to say, that Mr. Warsaae, the Norwegian

historian, some time ago, visited this town for the purpose of fixing upon the exact spot where Magnus was buried; and, after the most diligent search, taken in connexion with information afforded by manuscripts in the library of Copenhagen, he came to the conclusion that the grave of Magnus is a little mound, adjoining a clump of trees on the extremity of the place formerly called 'Island Maister,' and now known by the name of the 'Horse Island,' on the right of the new road to Ballydugan, which island is at present in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Henry."

FINIS.

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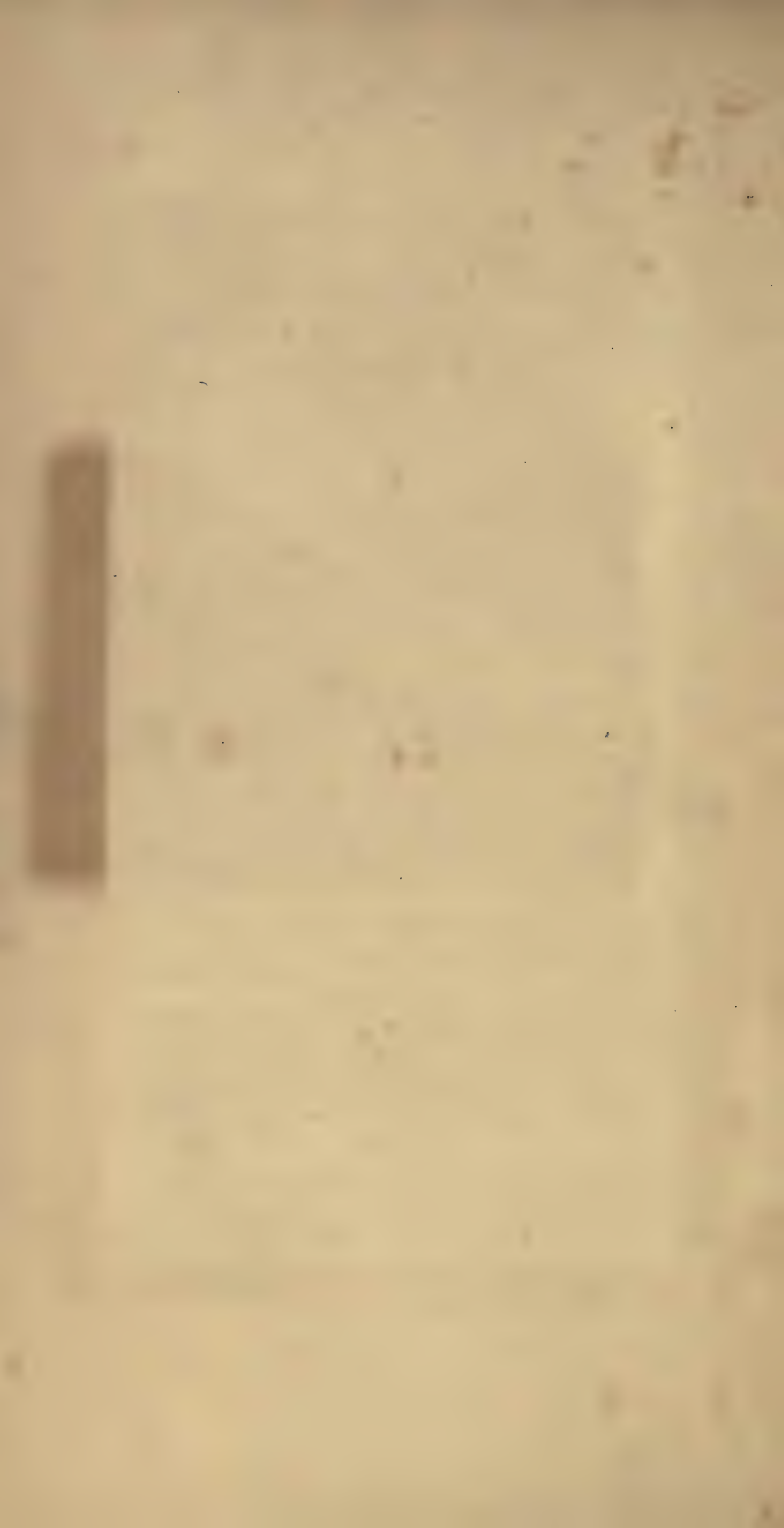
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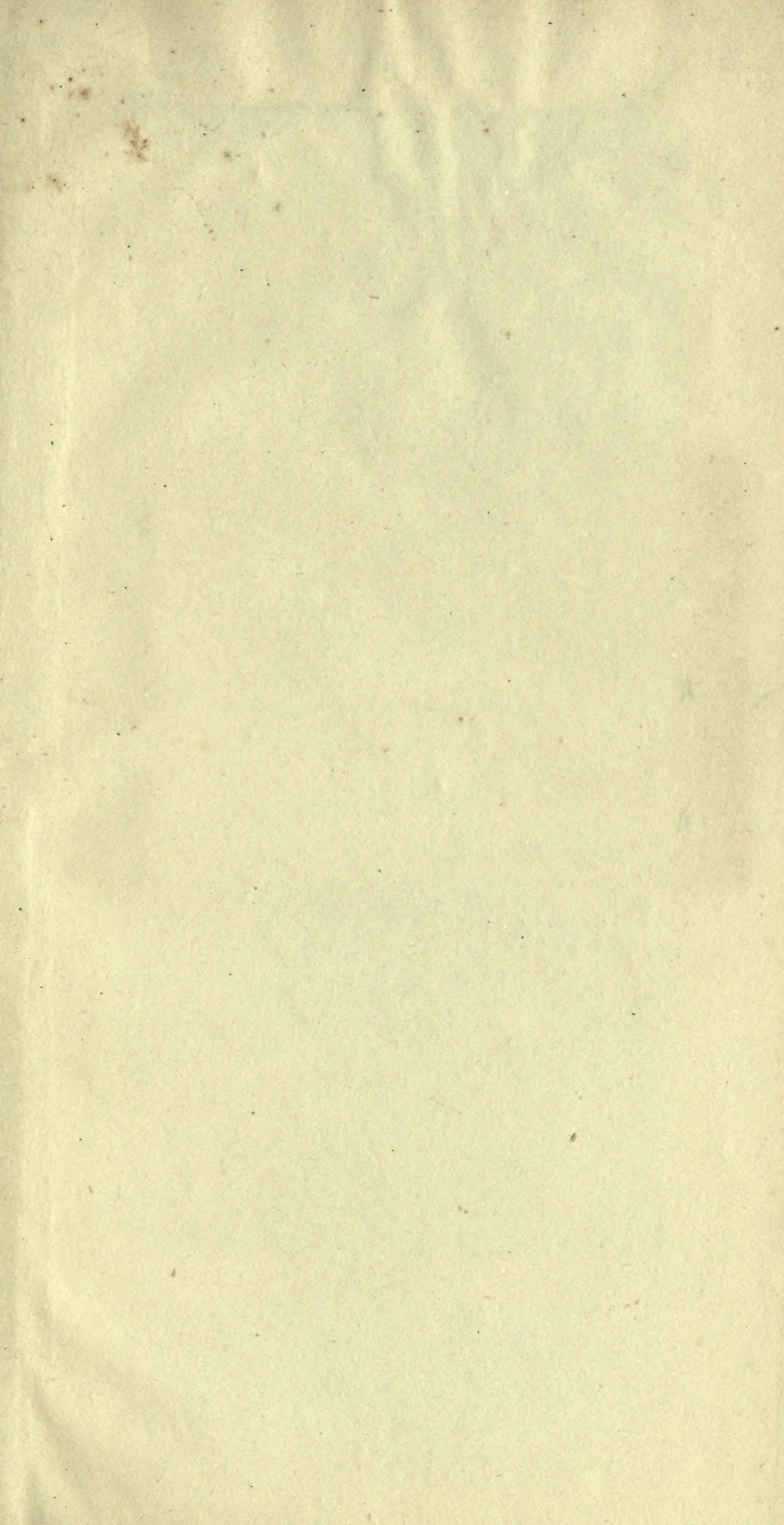
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